

Politics, Christianity and Society in Malawi

Essays in Honour of John McCracken



Edited by

**Kenneth R. Ross and
Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu**



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Politics, Christianity and Society in Malawi

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Essays in Honour of John McCracken

Editors

Kenneth R. Ross and Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu

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Contents

Notes on Contributors	9
Introduction: John McCracken and Malawi's History	
<i>Kenneth R. Ross and Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu</i>	17
John McCracken: an Africanist to Remember	
<i>John Lonsdale</i>	31
John McCracken: an Historian to Remember	34
<i>Megan Vaughan</i>	
John McCracken: a Malawianist to Remember	41
<i>Kings M. Phiri</i>	
John McCracken and the Development of Malawi Historiography	56
<i>Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu</i>	
Medicine, Politics and Christian Networks: John McCracken and the Historiography of Medicine in Malawi	75
<i>Markku Hukkanen</i>	
The Development of Malawian Church Historiography	92
<i>Klaus Fiedler</i>	
State Power, African Agency and Peasants' Food Security in Early Colonial Malawi, 1891-1918	116
<i>Bryson Nkhoma</i>	

"Africa Is an Education": Vernacular Language and the Missionary Encounter in Nineteenth-Century Malawi	
<i>Harri Englund</i>	138
Mothercraft in the DRCM: <i>Mthenga</i> Newspaper, Missionary Wives and African Women	
<i>Hendrina Kachapila</i>	163
"They were kept outside but their interest was inside": Examining the Role of African Women in the Construction of Social Identities in Colonial Malawi.	191
<i>Dorothy Tembo</i>	
The Contested Legacy of Malawi's Decolonization Process, 1944-1994	215
<i>Paul Chindza Banda and Gift Wasambo Kayira</i>	
Christianity and Nationalism in Karonga Hills: The Tale of Two Brothers During the Late Colonial Period 1954-1960	243
<i>Augustine Chingwala Musopole</i>	
Limits to State Power in Post-independence Development in Malawi, 1964-1983	266
<i>Gift Wasambo Kayira</i>	
Pastors, Priests, Prophets: Poverty and Christian Religion in Malawi 1861 to 2018	293
<i>John Chipembere Lwanda</i>	
The Influence of Christian Religious Authority in Education: A Trajectory of Religious Education in Malawi Schools from 1875 to 2018	320
<i>Macloud Frank Salanjira</i>	

African Agency in Malawian Neocharismatic Churches	345
<i>Felix Nyika</i>	
Dividing the Nation or Promoting Unity? Ethnic Based Associations and Production of Heritage in Malawi	372
<i>Mwayi Lusaka</i>	
John McCracken's Contribution to Malawi's Urban History	396
<i>Ruth Mandala</i>	
Ecological Change and Food Security: State Interventions into Peasant Agriculture in Colonial Malawi, 1891-1960	419
<i>Bryson Nkhoma</i>	
Andrew Ross, John McCracken and Jack Thompson: Three Malawi Historians and their Influence on Scotland-Malawi Relations Today	445
<i>Kenneth R. Ross</i>	
John McCracken Bibliography	471
General Bibliography	476
Index	509

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We are thankful also to all who responded to the call for papers that we issued with this volume in view. The extent of the response to this call bears witness to the debt that many scholars feel that they owe to the work of John McCracken. Even those that could not be included helped to sharpen our thinking. The authors who journeyed with us have been unfailingly understanding and supportive as we imposed often short deadlines during the various stages of revision entailed in the editorial process. As we have exercised editorial responsibility, we have been grateful to be able to turn to our senior consulting editors, Prof Kings M. Phiri and Prof Klaus Fiedler, who always offered sound advice.

The latter has also been an exceptionally sympathetic publisher through his role at Mzuni Press. Given John McCracken's consistent concern that his work be available to Malawian readers, we believe that Mzuni Press is an ideal publisher for this book since it publishes in Malawi while also having an international outlet through the London-based African Books Collective. Though a relatively young publisher, Mzuni Press has built up an impressive list of titles to which we are delighted that this volume can be added. It has been a pleasure to work with the Mzuni Press team, particularly Hope Kaombe, who did much of the work on layout and formatting, and

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Kenneth R. Ross
Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu

Zomba, December 2019

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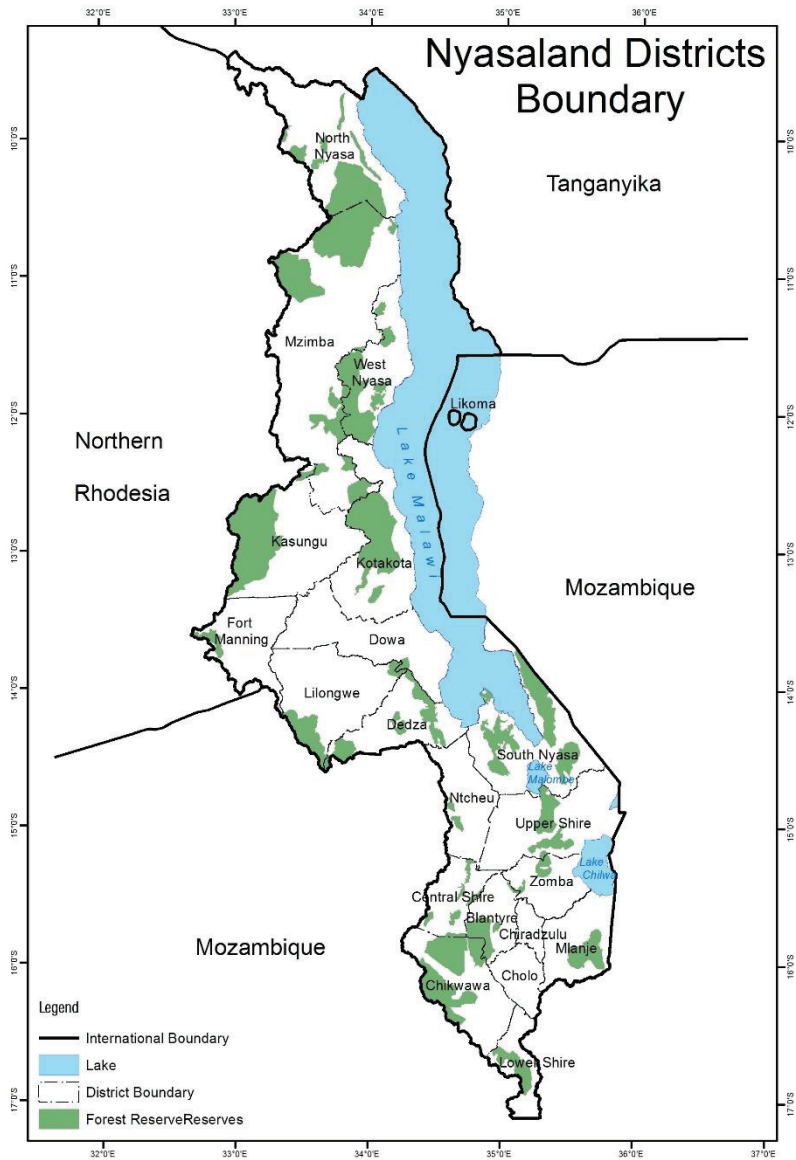
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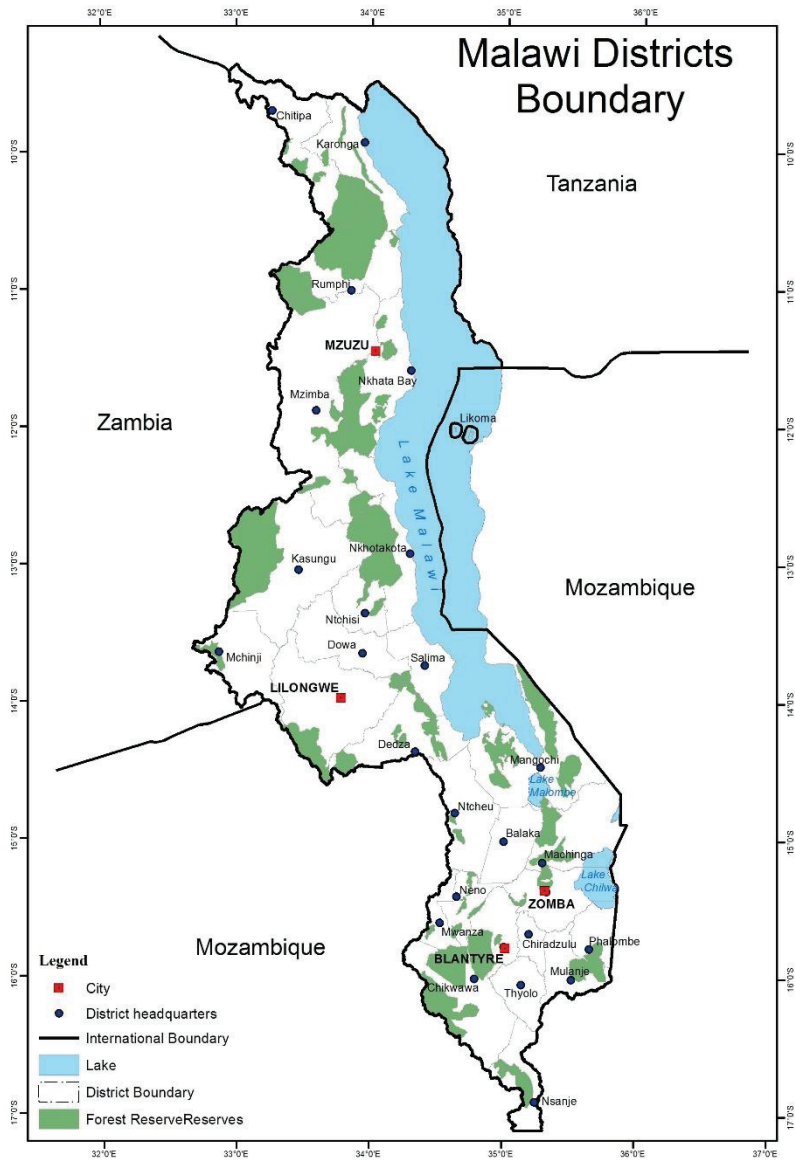
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Introduction: John McCracken and Malawi's History

Kenneth R. Ross and
Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu

This book has been written to celebrate the contributions of John McCracken, one of Africa's foremost historians. Some of the papers appearing in this volume were initially presented at a memorial conference in Edinburgh in April 2018 but the majority were received from interested scholars after circulating an announcement of the book project. Each of the authors has taken up a particular strand of McCracken's scholarly work and sought to offer an original contribution. Some engage closely with McCracken's writing while others venture to break fresh ground on territory suggested by his scholarship. What gives coherence to the book is that it is all engaged with the nexus of issues that John McCracken identified as holding the key to understanding Malawi's history.

Although McCracken began his research in Malawi around the time of independence in 1964, it was not until the early 1980s that he firmly established his authority as a distinguished Malawianist scholar. The book argues that after the first group of founding Africanist scholars had left in the late 1970s, McCracken continued to work on Malawi and became the leading authority in setting the agenda for research and writing of history in Malawi. He symbolizes the transition from the nationalist approach to one that explored the social history of Africa. Many scholars would eventually benefit from interaction with him personally or through his various published works.

This volume complements McCracken's seminal publication of *A History of Malawi*. It can be read as an attempt to expand on some of the themes covered in his *magnum opus*. It is a book that will offer fresh insights to those interested in the history of Malawi in particular and Africa in general. Researchers and students will benefit not only from fresh perspectives on Malawi but also the opportunity to be

exposed to new directions in scholarship. It would not be an exaggeration to state that, unlike other countries in the southern African region, Malawi lacks an active tradition of publishing historical studies which synthesize knowledge. The works that exist are few and come out irregularly, hence the publication is timely.

Before going further, it is fitting that this book should begin with a sketch of the life and career of Kenneth John McCracken. He was born on 1 July 1938 in Edinburgh and brought up in the Scottish Borders town of Kelso where his parents, Kenneth and Marjory, were both medical doctors.¹ His happy childhood was shared with his brother Peter. He was educated at St Mary's School, Melrose and at Sedburgh, where he played rugby for the first XV. He did National Service in the British army between 1957 and 1959, becoming a second lieutenant with the King's Own Scottish Borderers.

He considered himself a slow starter academically but his imagination was caught by history during his final year at school and he never looked back. 1959 saw him going up to St John's College Cambridge where he took his degree in history and was recruited as a research assistant by Harry Hinsley, the noted historian of international relations. In his final year he fell under the spell of Ronald Robinson and Jack Gallagher who were pioneering a new approach to imperial history that took seriously the experience of the colonized as well as of the colonizer.

So keen was McCracken to pursue this line of inquiry that at graduation he abandoned his original plan to become a schoolteacher and enrolled as a research student at Cambridge under Robinson's supervision. In September 1962 he learned from Professor George Shepperson of Edinburgh University that the extensive papers of the

¹ Towards the end of his life John McCracken asked Kenneth Ross to speak at his funeral service. Historian to the last, he supported the request with a set of autobiographical notes that provided an account of his life. These notes have informed the preparation of this part of the introduction. However, any errors or shortcomings are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Church of Scotland's Foreign Missions Committee had recently been deposited in the National Library of Scotland. This led him to take what, academically, he considered to be the most important decision of his life: to make a study of the Blantyre and Livingstonia missions in Malawi.

Following a year of intensive archival research he was delighted to take up the offer of a teaching post at the fledgling University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, today the University of Zimbabwe. This appointment not only allowed John to cut his teeth in University teaching but plunged him into African political realities. The forces of African nationalism were rising in Rhodesia and being met by the implacable resistance of the white settler Government of Ian Smith - soon to declare UDI. It was not a situation that easily allowed for neutrality and McCracken soon knew which side he was on.

A little-known fact about John McCracken is that he was arrested in Rhodesia in 1964, after taking part in a peaceful protest against the closure of the only newspaper sympathetic to African nationalism. He was detained for only a few hours but his colours were nailed to the mast and, though in his historical work he would always strive for objectivity and impartiality, his close understanding of the African nationalist cause opened up perspectives that had hitherto been closed to European imperial historians.

The same year McCracken made a research visit to Malawi, picking his moment nicely so that he could join the crowd in the stadium on the day Malawi became an independent nation. Who would have guessed that the young newly-arrived Scotsman looking on so intently would later become the most authoritative interpreter of the seventy years of British rule in Malawi? Meanwhile he based himself at the CCAP cottage high on Zomba Mountain, travelling down each day to work in the brick-built building on the main Zomba-Blantyre road that served at that time as the Malawi National Archives. On returning to Cambridge he began to write up his thesis and struck up a friendship with Jane Purkis, whom he had known since they were

fellow undergraduates. Romance blossomed and they were married in September 1965, setting off immediately for honeymoon in Rome and onwards to Dar-es-Salaam where they both had jobs at the newly founded University.

At the History Department of the University of Dar-es-Salaam, McCracken joined a group of brilliant young colleagues, led by Terry Ranger, who were pioneering a pro-African understanding of African colonial history, then considered highly radical. At that time the members of the History Department, including John Lonsdale and John Iliffe as well as Ranger, used to attend one another's lectures. It was only in retrospect that John realized they were the best series of lectures he would ever hear. In this period, he was proud to maintain, the cutting edge in the study of African history was to be found not at any of the prestigious Universities of the UK or USA but at the brand new University of Dar-es-Salaam.

The exhilaration that the McCrackens experienced through the intense intellectual life of the University of Dar-es-Salaam was sadly overtaken by tragedy in July 1966. They made a visit to Malawi to allow John to complete some final research for his dissertation. The visit went very well and included the opportunity for John to give one of the very first seminar presentations at the newly opened University of Malawi at Blantyre. On the final day of their return journey, however, they were involved in a head-on collision with a huge lorry carrying oil from Dar to Lusaka. John survived with extensive bruising but Jane was badly injured and died in hospital in Iringa the following day. Following the funeral John returned briefly to the UK to visit family members. He then continued with his work at Dar-es-Salaam for a further two years, still finding it a highly stimulating intellectual environment but with his personal life inevitably much affected by the tragic loss of Jane.

When John returned to Scotland in 1968 it was to another newly-founded University – Stirling, which would be his academic base for the rest of his life. In his early years he was in his element as the

History Department pioneered the study of the history of the non-Western world at a time when this was almost unheard of. An exceptionally able mature student named Monica Clough was a member of some of John's first classes. When he was introduced to her daughter Juliet they instantly fell in love and were married at Dunblane Cathedral in January 1972. It was obvious to anyone who met them that they were just as much in love 45 years later.

Meanwhile Malawi was never far from John's thoughts and when the opportunity came in 1980 to become Professor of History at the University of Malawi's Chancellor College, he jumped at the chance. By this time John and Juliet had a young family, Matthew born in 1973 and Caroline in 1978. The next three years were fulfilling and formative, in both professional and family life. John was impressed by the 100% attendance at his 8.00 am lectures and relished the Department's weekly research seminars. With such stimulating colleagues as Kings Phiri, Owen Kalinga and Megan Vaughan, scholarly collaboration deepened into profound personal friendship that would continue to be productive and inspirational for many years to come. The dark side of the experience was the oppressive political environment prevailing in Malawi at that time. McCracken advocated the cause of three students who had been taken into detention, which led to a rift between him and senior officials of the University. Nonetheless, he looked back on the Zomba years as among the most satisfying of his career.

It is noticeable that Europeans who become deeply involved and deeply identified with Africa can find it difficult to fit in completely with the establishment when they return to their home country. There may have been an element of this in the case of McCracken. Certainly, his happiest and most fulfilled times were when he was working in Africa and he was not always completely enchanted with the direction of academic life in the UK. It may also be that his scholarly quality was most fully appreciated by his African colleagues.

Be that as it may, the University of Stirling formed a congenial academic base and the McCracken family settled very happily in the nearby village of Doune where they played an active role in community life over many years. It was to Doune and Stirling that they returned in 1983 after their very fulfilling three years in Zomba. Now McCracken found himself at the height of the Thatcher era with cut-backs to University funding the order of the day and morale at an all-time low. Even in straightened circumstances, however, John played a leading role in the establishment of the Centre of Commonwealth Studies of which he was the founding Director. He also served as Head of the Department of History during a period when the future of the Department was very much at stake. He went on to become Head of the School of Arts, giving him opportunities to use his gifts in mentoring and encouraging younger colleagues. He retired from the University of Stirling, after 33 years of service, in 2002, but continued his association as an Honorary Senior Research Fellow.

Meanwhile, soon after returning from Zomba, McCracken co-organized a conference hosted by Edinburgh University's Centre for African Studies in May 1984. It took the theme, "Malawi: an Alternative Pattern of Development" and proved to be a landmark conference, demonstrating the extent to which scholarship in Malawi was beginning to break free from the controls imposed by the Banda regime in earlier decades.² In subsequent years McCracken became a major player in the wider community of African studies, with scholarly collaboration finding expression in a network of conferences and journals. From 1990 to 1992 he served as President of the African Studies Association of the United Kingdom, from which he received the prestigious award of Distinguished Africanist in 2008.

Amidst all these demanding commitments, McCracken was writing. His early work *Politics and Christianity in Malawi* is a thoroughly

² See John McCracken and Christopher Fyfe (eds), *Malawi: An Alternative Pattern of Development*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Centre of African Studies, 1984.

revised version of his doctoral thesis.³ Adrian Hastings described it as "a model, not easily surpassed, of mission history which is also genuinely social history drawing together a network of very varied themes."⁴ It remains in print more than forty years after its first publication - to John's delight, in an affordable Malawian paperback edition.⁵ Klaus Fiedler, who was responsible for the publication of the new edition in the Kachere Series, remarked that: "It has become the basic scholarly book for Malawian Church History." He went further to say, "I was impressed by his thoughtful foreword for the reprint. I never came across such a good foreword for a reprint. I have recommended it often to my students."⁶ In this way John's work continues to be highly influential among a new generation of Malawian students.

Even more so since the publication in 2012 of his *magnum opus* - *A History of Malawi 1859-1966*, not only the outstanding study of Malawi's colonial history but regarded as among the best single-country histories ever to be written about any African nation.⁷ John brought to this book a knowledge of the relevant primary and secondary sources that is unrivalled in its range and depth. His qualities of numeracy are also evident as many of his points are driven home by reference to statistical data. At the same time, the reader is led along by a masterly story-teller with an eye for the details and anecdotes which add interest to the narrative. When recounting, for example, the special visit to Malawi made by Oliver Lyttelton as

³ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province, 1875-1940*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

⁴ Quoted in John McCracken's autobiographical notes.

⁵ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940*, 2nd edition with new introduction, Blantyre: Kachere, 2000; 3rd edition, Zomba: Kachere, 2008.

⁶ Personal communication, October 2017.

⁷ John McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1859-1966*, Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012.

Colonial Secretary to address issues of land policy in 1954, he includes the information that Lyttelton fell over the bannisters at Government House in Zomba in the middle of the night, hitting the stairs twelve feet below and leaving him covered in bruises. It is not clear that this incident had any influence on the development of land policy but it undoubtedly makes for more interesting reading. Without any sacrifice of academic rigour the book turns out to be a real page-turner.

The volume can be read as an economic history since a primary focus throughout is the question of how the country was developing economically or, unfortunately, more frequently, *not* developing economically. In revealing Malawi's inherent economic weakness and the failure of British colonial rule to address it effectively, McCracken relentlessly pursues the question of what the twists and turns of colonial economic policy meant for the average Malawian. In many ways this paints a bleak picture but it also reveals the resilience of Malawian communities for whom economic conditions have been continually unfavourable. He demonstrates a remarkable capacity to put himself in the shoes of ordinary Malawians and to explicate what social, political and economic changes meant for them. And it is all delivered in wonderfully crisp prose. Scholars, students and general readers will always be grateful to have such a magisterial, gripping and dependable account of this formative period in Malawi's modern history.⁸

His final work, an edition of the papers of the Commission of Inquiry into the 1915 Chilembwe Rising, secures a primary source that will continue to be a priceless resource for scholars in many fields.⁹ Aided by McCracken's introduction and extensive annotation,

⁸ See further Kenneth R. Ross, "Review of John McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859-1966*, Woodbridge, Suffolk and Rochester NY: James Currey, 2012," *Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 66, No. 1, 2013, pp. 51-57.

⁹ John McCracken (ed), *Voices from the Chilembwe Rising: Witness Testimonies made to the Nyasaland Rising Commission of Inquiry, 1915*, British Academy Fontes Historiae Africanae Series, Oxford University Press, 2015.

they can engage first-hand with the witness testimonies which shed light on many different aspects of life in Malawi during the early part of the 20th century. Besides the major books there were many carefully crafted articles, including some that have proved to be seminal works, such as "'Marginal Men': the Colonial Experience in Malawi"¹⁰ or "Experts and Expertise in Colonial Malawi."¹¹ There were also edited volumes such as *Malawi in Crisis: The 1959/60 Nyasaland State of Emergency and its Legacy*, the volume which resulted from a conference that John co-organized in Zomba in 2009 to mark the 50th anniversary of the 1959 State of Emergency.¹²

McCracken was a highly principled scholar – infinitely conscientious in his supervision of students, in external examining and in the refereeing and reviewing that he did for such periodicals as the *Journal of Southern African Studies*; meticulous to the point of perfectionist in the preparation of his own published work; not much interested in University politics from a careerist point of view but ready to fight tooth and nail when he believed that scholarly integrity was at stake; passionately committed to the academic development of younger colleagues, especially the Malawian historians with whom he worked across four decades. As Scotland's relations with Malawi have revitalized since the turn of the century, McCracken stood out as an advocate of the need to be a "critical friend," ready to speak out when there is injustice to be confronted.

McCracken has been a mainstay of many an academic conference related to African history. Often, he would be delivering a formidable address but even when he was part of the audience, he would make his mark. As one of his Africanist colleagues put it: "He had the

¹⁰ John McCracken, "'Marginal Men': The Colonial Experience in Malawi," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 1989, pp. 537-564.

¹¹ John McCracken, "Experts and Expertise in Colonial Malawi," *African Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 322, 1982, pp. 101-116.

¹² Kings M. Phiri, John McCracken and Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu (eds), *Malawi in Crisis: The 1959/60 Nyasaland State of Emergency and its Legacy*, Zomba: Kachere, 2012.

capacity to put questions in a uniquely interesting way." He will be remembered as someone who combined wit, charm and deep humanity with sharp judgement and critical acumen. His literary legacy will secure his memory and we can be confident that his work will continue to be used and valued for generations to come. His human legacy will possibly be even more influential as his students and colleagues take forward the unique inspiration that he brought to historical study. It would not be an exaggeration to describe him as the father of modern Malawian history.

John continued to be fit and productive in his retirement. In fact, he published some of his best work when he was in his 70s. However, in the summer of 2017, as he entered his 80th year, John was diagnosed with terminal cancer, a situation he accepted with grace and courage. He died on 23 October 2017. He is survived by his wife Juliet, children Matthew and Caroline and grandchildren Amelia, Charlie, Alfie and Laurie.

He is survived too by a community of historians who mourn his passing and whose work continues to be informed by his scholarship. Representatives of this community took the opportunity to pay tribute to his contribution at the above-mentioned conference held at the University of Edinburgh on 26 April 2018. Titled "Politics, Society and Christianity in Malawi and Beyond: A Memorial Conference for John McCracken and Jack Thompson," it was co-hosted by the Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, Centre for the Study of World Christianity, University of Edinburgh, Division of History and Politics, University of Stirling and the Scotland Malawi Partnership; and sponsored by the British Institute in Eastern Africa, Nairobi. It honoured the contribution of both John McCracken and his long-term colleague and collaborator Jack Thompson who died only a few months before him, in August 2017.

This book therefore represents a second scholarly initiative to recognize and honour the life and work of John McCracken, organized this time from an editorial base in Zomba, Malawi. As indicated

above, it has some overlap with the Edinburgh conference since the chapters by Vaughan, Phiri, Mulwafu, Englund, Lwanda, Hokkanen and Ross have been developed from presentations made at the 2018 conference. However, a larger part of the book comprises chapters by Malawi-based scholars who were not able to travel to the Edinburgh occasion. It therefore brings together international scholars who have made Malawi a primary focus of their research with the community of historical scholarship that has developed in Malawi's own Universities. It was within these two closely integrated communities that John McCracken lived his life and developed his work. By gathering original writing from leading representatives of both communities, it is hoped that this volume will not only pay tribute to a much-loved colleague and mentor but also set a new benchmark for Malawi's historical scholarship and lay foundations for future work.

With this goal in view, all chapters have gone through the normal process of peer review to check accuracy of empirical data and enhance academic rigour. In order to be available to the Malawian reading public while at the same time speaking to the wider international community, the book has been published in Malawi by Mzuni Press. This is in line with the values of McCracken who always prioritized the availability of his own works to the people and areas where the research was done. Internationally, the book will be available through the London-based Africa Books Collective.

The book has brought together contributions from various people who either knew McCracken or those who read and interacted with him over the many years of his work in Africa and the UK. The first section comprises reflections by John Lonsdale, Megan Vaughan and Kings Phiri, former colleagues who write about McCracken as Africanist, historian and Malawianist. This sets the context for understanding the man who would be appropriately considered the father of Malawian history.

The second strand sets McCracken's work in the context of Malawi's historiography as a whole. Mulwafu provides a historiographical overview of McCracken's research interests which have influenced much of the scholarship in Malawi. Markku Hokkanen examines McCracken's contribution to the historiography of medicine in Malawi, examining ways in which medical missionaries facilitated the achievement of the civilizing mission in Africa. Klaus Fiedler considers McCracken's fundamental role in the development of Malawian church history and traces its development since the publication of *Politics and Christianity* in 1977.

The manifold influence of Christianity on the history of Malawi was a lifelong scholarly concern for McCracken and aspects of this theme feature prominently in the present volume. Hendrina Kachapila and Dorothy Tembo interrogate the role of missionaries in giving agency to African women in colonial Malawi through newspapers and women's forums. Harri Englund examines the efforts of early Christian missionaries to come to terms with the vernacular environment around them. In particular, he focusses on David Clement Scott and his attempts during the early decades of Blantyre Mission to inculcate the Christian message in vernacular languages and cultures. John Lwanda and Felix Nyika draw attention to more recent developments as each offers a critical analysis of the Pentecostal churches in modern Malawi. Nyika's focus is with the evolution of a new brand of Pentecostalism, which he describes as "Neocharismatic." Lwanda exposes the irony of the church's failure to be consistent in its calling to be a service provider to the poor, particularly those in urban areas. Instead of responding to the needs of the poor, modern Pentecostalism emphasizes opulence and materialism as exemplified by the penchant for flashy dressing, cars and churches.

As in many other African countries, the history of education in Malawi cannot be complete without the examining the role of missionaries. Macloud Salanjira explores the debate on the provision of religious education in Malawian educational institutions. He shows

the manner in which the ideology for religious education has developed and the contest for space and influence in offering either Bible knowledge or religious education in Malawian schools. A related paper is by Augustine Musopole who looks at the contrasting life experiences of the two mission-educated Musopole brothers, particularly during the State of Emergency in 1959. While one joined the ministry as an ordained Presbyterian pastor the other went in a different direction and became an atheist and politician.

Issues arising from colonial rule, which very often have post-colonial repercussions, also feature prominently. Bryson Nkhoma picks up one of the central themes of McCracken's scholarship, the peasantry. He examines the performance of peasant food producers under changing state policy frameworks in the early colonial period. The idea of questioning the role and capacity of the state in implementing policies has been discussed by several authors. The uneven implementation of colonial policy is further developed in another paper by Nkhoma in which he examines state intervention in restructuring peasant agriculture to meet the growing demands for food security. Similar efforts are reflected in the post-colonial period where, as Gift Kayira shows, the state pursued an oscillating policy regarding economic development.

Gift Kayira and Paul Chiudza Banda have revisited the old debate on decolonization but this time around with emphasis on the role of so-called marginalized groups. They argue that the legacy of the youth, women and workers has been under-represented in favour of elite interest groups. Mwayi Lusaka takes us back to one of the earlier themes of McCracken: the rise of nationalism through native associations. While McCracken focused on the colonial context, Lusaka deals with the rise of post-colonial ethnic identities and how they are being manipulated to advance political interests. Although McCracken's focus was largely on Malawi, he was always attentive to historical developments elsewhere on the African continent. The rise of academic interest in urban history in the 1980s did not miss his attention so that he was able to write on the significance of the newly

established colonial town Blantyre in shaping political and economic developments. This is the theme that Ruth Mandala's chapter engages McCracken's scholarship and further expounds on the range of areas that could be of historical interest to scholars of Africa's urban history. Finally, Kenneth Ross examines the role of John McCracken as a public intellectual in his native Scotland, setting his contribution alongside those of Andrew Ross and Jack Thompson, two fellow historians who completed substantial work on Malawi from a Scottish base.

The decision taken to produce this book represents a modest attempt to express gratitude to a scholar who devoted almost his entire academic career to research and writing on Malawi. Just as he pioneered the development of knowledge and identified key historical themes, we believe that his influence on subsequent scholarship has been suitably reflected in the variety of themes covered in the chapters of this volume. We remain convinced that for years to come, anyone wishing to research or write about the modern history of Malawi will find it difficult to do so without engaging in some way with the works of John McCracken. To this end, as well as the usual general bibliography listing all the works cited in the volume, the book includes a complete bibliography of John McCracken's publications

The analyses contained in the chapters of this book represent a first attempt to publish a collection of historical studies that address the key themes to which McCracken drew attention throughout his long scholarly career. Unlike the case in other countries, volumes of this nature do not come out on a regular basis in Malawi. It can therefore be expected that the book will set an agenda and suggest directions of travel that will require the attention of those who seek to contribute to the development of Malawi's historiography in the years to come.

John McCracken: An Africanist to Remember

John Lonsdale

My most recent memory of John dates from little more than a month before he so suddenly died, when he and Juliet shared with my wife Moya and me a week at James Currey's house on Tresco in the Scilly Isles. It was an exhilarating time, full of John's wit, his happy memories of Malawi and Malawian colleagues, long walks, and fiercely competitive games of Scrabble before supper. It was John as I remembered him from 1963-64 when we were both, with John Iliffe, research students at Cambridge, learning to play room cricket with Ronald Robinson, ex-RAF bomber crew, and how to present argument at seminars chaired by Eric Stokes, ex-gunner in the Indian army and recently returned from the University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in what was still Salisbury.

We all shared in what we appreciated at the time was the good fortune of being involved at the beginning of the United Kingdom's study of African history, in which the first real classic was George Shepperson and Thomas Price's study of John Chilembwe, *Independent African*; this set the standard for us junior scholars and has never since been surpassed. Nor did our good fortune end then, since all three of us started our careers with lectureships at the University College, Dar-es-Salaam, under the charismatic leadership of Terry Ranger, recently expelled from Ian Smith's Rhodesia. Terry had only to call 'John' for four of us, the three from Cambridge and John Sutton the archaeologist from Oxford, to hurry down the History corridor to his office. Andrew Roberts, as a research fellow, was more rarely present. I think we all tried to model our lectures on Terry's, wonderful examples of clarity and coherent argument, each point hanging on a question of interpretation. We learned from each other, attending as many of each other's lectures as we could. There was, after all, much to learn at this dawn of professional Africanist

historiography and the 'Dar school' was thought to be at the cutting edge, to the displeasure of some of our colleagues.

I went back to Cambridge, John to Stirling and Chancellor College. We saw much less of each other in later years. But in 1992, when John was President of the African Studies Association of the UK, I took a Kenyan research student with me up to the ASAUK conference at Stirling. One evening, after supper, John presided over a presentation by the poet Jack Mapanje, only recently released from Hastings Banda's prison. It was a moving occasion, as one would expect, and it ran over time. At 10.00 pm one of the University's custodians entered the auditorium to demand that we all depart, and with all due speed. He wanted to go home. John complied with what sounded almost like an order, but with all due courtesy and good self-deprecatory humour. My Kenyan student was astounded at this demonstration of social equality between junior staff and senior academic, so unlike the deferential culture of home.

But if we did not often meet, we read each other. Our interests ran roughly in parallel, John's in Malawi, mine in Kenya. We both began by following missionary history, not as theologians but, because we did not doubt that religious belief could be a goad to social action, as social and political historians keen to unravel some of the cultural and intellectual formation of Africa's first literate national elites—one of the major preoccupations in this early period of African historiography. Apart from anything else the sources were so comparatively easily accessible. John's *Politics and Christianity in Malawi*, which came out with the Cambridge University Press in 1977, was a landmark in this genre. His emphasis on the resilient continuities in the local politics of literate privilege, from early improvement associations to the popular mass nationalism of the later 1940s and thereafter, was delivered with a characteristically generous and gentle disagreement with my own earlier suggestion that such continuity from elite to mass politics was not to be expected.

There followed an extraordinary procession of precision articles on widely different aspects of mostly twentieth century Malawi's colonial history, on peasant cash crop agriculture, policing, fishing, industrial unrest, 'development policy' devised by experts and resisted by Africans who generally knew better, African photography, coercion in the 1959 emergency, and so on. These articles, clearly designed to clear the way for the magnum opus, John's 2012 *History of Malawi 1859-1966*, gave an uncannily accurate reflection of where colonial historiography was next turning its attention, as scholars tried to deepen and broaden their knowledge of that Africa-wide ordeal. I certainly made it my job to keep up with this flow of research, in the belief that few knew better than John where to look for the next layer of human understanding of what it was like for Africans to seize opportunity or deflect or resist subjection under a colonial regime that did not, in the end, have the will or the resources to keep Africans from living often fulfilling lives. John taught us as much about uncertain white colonials as about determined native subjects—as a humane historian should. May he long be looked to as an example of how to write African history.

John McCracken: an Historian to Remember

Megan Vaughan

When news of John's serious illness reached me in Malawi in August 2017, I was staying in Chilumba, on the northern lakeshore, almost in the shadow of Livingstonia: a place that had meant so much both professionally and personally to John. It was an extremely sad moment, but also an ideal context in which to reflect on John's immense contribution to our understanding of the history of Malawi and to African history more generally. It was a good place to think about the rich seams of John's work – on the strands that connected his early pioneering study of Livingstonia mission and the relationship between politics and Christianity, to his newly published work on the Chilembwe Rising, and his recently published monumental study of the history of modern Malawi.¹ It was a good place in which to reflect on his sensitive handling of historical sources and historical subjects, his warmth, generosity, gentle humour and penetrating intelligence.

I first met John in 1980 when he arrived with Juliet and their two small children, Matthew and Caroline, to take up the chair of History (and headship of the department) in Chancellor College. My toddler daughter Anna, quickly bonded with the slightly older Caroline and looked up to her as a big sister; just as I looked up to John. I knew

¹ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Cambridge: CUP, 1977; John McCracken, *Voices from the Chilembwe Rising: Witness Testimonies Made to the Nyasaland Rising Commission of Inquiry, 1915*, Oxford: OUP, 2015; John McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1859-1966*, Woodbridge, Suffolk: James Currey/Boydell and Boydell, 2012. It is testimony to the lasting importance of *Politics and Christianity*, that a second edition was published in Malawi in 2000 and has gone into a second reprint (2008).

immediately that he would be a friend; I learned very quickly that he would also be a generous mentor.

Chancellor College in the early 1980s was definitely *not* the University of Dar-es-Salaam in the late 1960s, where John had previously worked; but neither was it Salisbury, where John had first experienced African academic life in the University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland. I suppose you could say that it was a strange mix of the two. Though John's predecessor in his post, Professor James Bertin Webster, had sported an Afro shirt and beard, in general Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda's version of Scottish Presbyterianism mixed with an even more peculiar variant of the invention of tradition ordained that European men should wear suits, have their hair cut short and ensure that the angle of their trouser legs conform to an algorithm that somebody (who?) in the Office of the President had dreamed up, and that European ladies like myself should not show their white knees or wear trousers. More seriously, it was a time of serious political repression, censorship, fear and political imprisonment (especially but not exclusively of the northern educated elite, so well-known to John) and deportations of foreigners who fell out of line. And yet, despite the spies in the classroom, the slightly mad Kafkaesque censorship of the library, the phone tapping and whispering, Chancellor College was an interesting and lively place.

In general, our students in the History Department were enthusiastic and eager and curious and perhaps a little too ready to draw historical parallels. If you could not talk openly about political dissent, you could at least reflect on other times and places where apparently unassailable systems had folded in the face of popular opposition or collapsed under the weight of their own hubris. On one occasion I recall one of my colleagues looking a little shaky after a lecture he had given on (if I remember correctly, the fall of the Roman Empire) during which the room had become electric as students drew their own conclusions from this historical example. He had felt obliged to deliver an additional mini-lecture on the limits and dangers of drawing lessons from history.

A remarkably resilient research culture had evolved in the History department. Under the leadership of J. Bertin Webster, Kings Phiri, and Zimani Kadzimira, a large oral history project had been underway for some years – into which I had been generously inserted. John joined a department in which students, schooled in the techniques of oral historical research, often produced small gems of high quality research as their final year projects, and where the staff gathered each week for a research seminar. Equally lively research took place in the Religious Studies Department and, as is well known, the Writers' Group was what would now be called an 'incubator' for a generation of gifted Malawian poets and novelists. With Kings Phiri, John set about both strengthening and broadening the History Department research culture, expanding it beyond its pre-colonial focus, encouraging work on the colonial period and the use of archival sources.

John's quiet diplomacy was useful in the context of the University of Malawi at that time. He got things done under the radar. A gentle feminist, he encouraged women students to participate fully in the programme of oral history research, and many of those former students today remember him with gratitude and affection. Thanks to John the Department played host to some eminent visitors – Terry Ranger passed through at the time of Zimbabwean independence and gave a lecture; John Iliffe came for longer, delivering a series of riveting lectures to our students. But if John was enjoying the intellectual and educational energy of the department, it was impossible to avoid the larger political context. Many of our colleagues were either in jail or in exile. John had firm principles, a deep dislike for political cronyism and of course an abhorrence for the blatant re-writing of history which was continually going on around us. It was an interesting time, but it was definitely not a comfortable time.

In the midst of all of this, and particularly when life on campus was just too exasperating, John was busy at work in the national archives, a short walk from his house, accumulating the material that would eventually go into the making of John's second major book, *A History of Malawi*. In the cool of the archives reading room John was

perhaps at his happiest professionally – working through files, many of which had hitherto been unread, and coming across many fascinating twists and turns in Malawi's political, economic and social history. Interrupted only by the entrance and exit of the presidential cavalcade from nearby State House – at which archives staff, cleaners and readers alike were instructed to leave the building, line the road and clap enthusiastically as the President drove slowly past in his open-top Bentley. Through his impeccably thorough archival work, aided by his great sensitivity to his historical subjects, John was slowly assembling a complex and compelling account of Malawi's past and its present.

As readers of *A History of Malawi* will know, John was well aware that national histories had gone somewhat out of fashion in Africa after the 1970s. And yet he felt that Malawians deserved and needed a comprehensive and unbiased account of their modern history, which was not over determined by either nationalism nor by the neo-Marxist theories that had informed some of the generalizations made about Malawi as a neglected backwater of the British Empire. Whilst acknowledging the enduring problem and tragedy of extreme poverty in Malawi, John was determined to show that this was not the entire story. He and I differed to some degree over this – John sometimes felt that my work on famine, disease and death was a rather self-indulgent equivalent of the 'misery memoir', while I felt that however illuminating and enlivening John's accounts of the political and intellectual history of Malawi were, they needed to be set against a background of material conditions.

John's deep affection for Malawi never led him to romanticize its history, but he wanted to tell it in all its complexity. This involved, amongst other things, a careful reconstruction of the political economy of colonial Malawi – a triangular economy built on a combination of smallholder production, settler agriculture and labour migrancy. Just telling *that* story would have been more than enough for most scholars. John pieced together the story of the colonial management (or mismanagement) of the country's land and

resources and the evolution of a labour tenancy system which many Malawians saw as the direct descendant of slavery which (as they well knew) had been condemned by none other than David Livingstone and the Queen of England, and yet which persisted and was even practiced by settlers bearing the surname Livingstone.

John got to grips with the intricacies of the tobacco marketing system with as much thoroughness as he researched the country's religious and intellectual history. He knew, of course, that in the lived experience of colonial Malawians, these realms of history were integrated and should not be artificially separated by academic specialization. If a peasant farmer who was also a pastor was going to quote chapter and verse of the Bible in his struggle to obtain a fair price for his crop, then the story needed to be told holistically. John's account of Malawi's nationalist politics was written with both sympathy for the anti-colonial cause and a realistic perspective on the limits and distortions of nationalism. He ended *The History of Malawi* with an account of the 1964 Cabinet Crisis and an astutely drawn parallel between those two compelling figures of the rebel – John Chilembwe and Henry Chipembere.

In *Voices from the Chilembwe Rising* John returned to the period of Malawi's history that perhaps fascinated him most, and also to the dominant political actors of that period – the Christian educated elite. If anyone implied that Malawi's history was somehow less significant than say, that of Zimbabwe, John would visibly bristle and not just because of his loyalty to the country he chose for a lifetime of study. The history of Malawi was, as his work consistently showed, also the history of the region and much more beyond that – an integral part of global history. This was expressed directly by witness after witness coming before the Chilembwe enquiry commission – employing Biblical exegesis, they demonstrated a remarkable breadth of vision, a connectedness to Atlantic history and Indian Ocean history, a larger global history of oppression and liberation.

I am sorry that I do not have time to do justice to John's own breadth of vision and the depth of his scholarship. Some time ago I found myself in conversation with Landeg White, another eminent scholar of Malawi we have sadly also lost recently. The conversation focused on John's work and particularly our admiration for his many illuminating papers on a wide range of subjects – we agreed that we both loved "Marginal Men." published in 1989, which, like so much of John's work, has more than stood the test of time. But in competition there were also his papers on the railway workers' strike of 1960, on the Italian community, on fishing and the colonial economy, on Laurens van de Post – and what about those lovely pieces that John wrote with such clear enjoyment for his subject – on bicycles or on Malawi's first photographer?² As this list implies John could have fun with his work, just as he could be moved to real anger by its subject matter.

Some of my favourite memories of John are when these two emotions came together, not so much in collision but in a kind of controlled explosion. John could be very, very funny, and often he was at his funniest when at his most outraged by some stupidity or injustice. When incandescent his wit could be extremely caustic. But I think my fondest memory is of driving with John across the Phalombe plain from Zomba to Mulanje, admiring the outline of Mount Mulanje in the distance, commenting on the state of the rains

² John McCracken, "'Marginal Men': the Colonial Experience in Malawi," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 1989, pp. 537-564; John McCracken, "Bicycles in Colonial Malawi: a Short History," *Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 1, 2011, pp. 1-12; John McCracken, "Mungo Murray Chisuse and the Early History of Photography in Malawi," *Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 2008, pp. 1-18; John McCracken, "Economy and Ethnicity: the Italian Community in Malawi," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 32, No. 2, 1991, pp. 313-332; John McCracken, "Imagining the Nyika Plateau: Laurens van der Post, the Phoka and the Making of a National Park," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4, 2006, pp. 807-821.

and the maize crop, and musing on the fascinating history of a country we both loved.

Kenneth John McCracken: A Malawianist to Remember

Kings M. Phiri

Introduction

This chapter addresses some fundamental issues about the late Prof. John McCracken, who died of cancer on 23 October 2017, such as who he was; the kind of life and career he had in Africa and Britain from about 1964 to 2012; the collaborative network he was able to maintain with other African scholars during his long career; his interpretation of Malawi's historical experience; and his overall academic legacy.

In compiling and presenting it for inclusion in the memorial publication at hand, the writer has freely drawn from the work and social relationship he was privileged to have had with McCracken over a period of about forty-six years. It was a relationship which began in Malawi in the early 1970s and developed without rupture over the following four decades, during which McCracken generously served the writer as mentor, motivator, collaborator and friend.

The Man and his Career

John McCracken was born in 1938, on the Scottish side of the border between Scotland and England. He went to school in Edinburgh in the late 1940s and 1950s, and, following a period of military service, studied at Cambridge University in the late 1950s and the early 1960s. At Cambridge, he studied History under such renowned British imperial historians and specialists in African affairs of the time as Jack Gallagher and Ronald Robinson. While at Cambridge, in the course of searching for a PhD research topic, in 1963, he was advised by the veteran Central Africanist, Prof. George Shepperson of Edinburgh

University, to focus on the history of the Free Church of Scotland – Livingstonia Mission.¹

Begun in 1964, the research on the Livingstonia Mission took McCracken four years and resulted in a PhD thesis that was titled "Livingstonia Mission and Evolution of Malawi, 1875-1939," and submitted to Cambridge University in 1967. Meanwhile, McCracken was well set on building a flourishing academic career. This began in 1964, with his securing of a teaching and research position at the University of Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), from where he in subsequent years progressed to the University of Dar-es-Salaam in Tanzania, teaching in Scotland, Malawi and then back to Stirling.

Throughout his academic career in Africa and Britain, McCracken was admired and respected by colleagues for his humility, evenhandedness, ability to mix well with students and fellow lecturers, and dedication to scholarship. What is more, he was a keen and enthusiastic participant of seminars, workshops and conferences. Recalling the days of his chairmanship of the History Department at Chancellor College, University of Malawi, in the early 1980s, this writer vividly remembers how supportive McCracken was of research undertaken by students and younger academics. He rarely missed the presentation of research-in-progress at seminars for which Chancellor College had built a solid foundation.

To my generation of upcoming academics, he was a caring and empathizing mentor, and I for one benefited a lot from him. He was explicit but gentle in his criticism of my work, and forthright in his commendation of whatever progress I was making in my academic career at the University of Malawi. He at times even went out of way to let the rest of the Africanist community know about the meaningful progress I was making within the context of the constraining environment we had in Malawi. For example, in his introduction to a special issue of the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, he underscored

¹ George Shepperson, "Obituary: Dr John McCracken," *Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 71, No. 1, 2018, p. 57.

the humble but significant contribution I was then making to academic life in Malawi:

"Over the last 30 years, Kings Phiri has been a leading representative of Malawian scholars who have remained at Chancellor College through the Banda years and beyond, sustaining the struggle for academic integrity against every type of political and economic pressure."²

And he was consistent in his measure of favourable support. A year before his demise, he sent me a complimentary copy of his recently published book, *Voices from the Chilembwe Rising*,³ which was lavishly autographed. The autograph in question was a flattering valedictory note: "Kings Phiri, this is presented to you, with many thanks for your advice, assistance, friendship and support."

Academic Career in Africa and Britain

As an academic, McCracken was a dedicated Africanist, specializing in the teaching and writing of African history. To that effect, he from 1964 to 2002 progressed from one academic appointment to another in Africa and Britain. His academic tour started at the University of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1964-1965, after which he moved to Dar-es-Salaam University where he taught from 1965 to 1969. Thereafter, he was based at Stirling University in Scotland from 1969 to 2002, with a break of three years during which he served as Professor and Head of History in the University of Malawi at Zomba from 1980 to 1983.

According to McCracken's own testimony, the four years he spent at Dar-es-Salaam University in the late 1960s were an inspiring, formative phase of his teaching and research career. He became and served as a member of the then outspoken and influential Dar-es-Salaam School of History which, under the leadership of Professor Terence Ranger, commended the loyalty and talent of such brilliant Africanist historians of the time as Isariah Kimambo, Arnold Temu,

² *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2002, p. 6.

³ *Voices from the Chilembwe Rising*, Oxford: The British Academy, 2015.

John Iliffe, John Lonsdale and Walter Rodney. In its teaching and research programme, the school in question laid emphasis on African initiative and agency in the making of African history. Among other things, it undertook bold curricular reforms in order to evolve a History teaching menu that would be relevant to the developmental needs of the new nation that Tanzania was at the time. And what is more, under the influence of the Dar-es-Salaam School, the activities of the History Faculty at Dar-es-Salaam University extended beyond campus to include the running of History seminars, workshops and conferences in various regions of Tanzania.⁴

In contrast, during the three years he spent at the University of Malawi as Head of History, McCracken was more of a giver than a receiver. To begin with, he made a deep impression on us with his perfectionist scholarly disposition. He took keen interest in the research plans and projects of every member of the department, promoted the History Research Seminar as a forum for presenting and discussing whatever faculty or student research was in progress, and zealously directed and monitored Student Archival Research at the Zomba National Archives.⁵

It was with similar academic integrity that McCracken conducted himself during the thirty-three years he was a faculty member at Stirling University in Scotland. He was an extremely dedicated teacher and scholar, one who built a reputation among students and fellow academics, of being a teacher of integrity, a dedicated scholar, a caring administrator, and a listening colleague.⁶ Stirling University did recognize McCracken for these attributes. In the 1990s, he was

⁴ John McCracken, "Terry Ranger: A Personal Appreciation," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 2, 1997, pp. 177-181; N. Kimambo, *Three Decades of Production of Historical Knowledge at Dar es Salaam*, Dar es Salaam: Dar es Salaam University Press, 1993.

⁵ I was then privileged to serve under Professor McCracken as a young lecturer in History.

⁶ Angela Smith, "Dr. John McCracken, 1938-2017: Obituary," *Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 71, No. 1, 2018, p. 56.

successively entrusted with several administrative responsibilities, including Chairmanship of the History Department from 1994 to 1996, and Directorship of the Centre of Commonwealth Studies from 1997 to 2001.

The 1990s were also a period during which McCracken's academic career was widely recognized throughout Britain for its scholarly impeccability. Among other things, he was appointed to the Board of the Journal of Southern African Studies and elected to the Presidency of the African Studies Association of the United Kingdom. At the end of his term as president of that association in June 1992, he presented a broad overview, in public lecture form, of the development of African History teaching and research in Britain from the mid-1950s to 1990.⁷ This was a lecture in which he contrasted the robust enthusiasm which existed for African Studies in Britain in the 1960s with the demoralizing decline that had set in during the 1980s. Suffice to say that following his retirement from Stirling University, the African Studies Association in the United Kingdom granted McCracken the status of "Distinguished Africanist."

In assessing McCracken's academic career and the way it developed over the period of about 38 years, account should be taken of what were clearly his positive attributes in the way he operated and interacted with others. These included his simplicity and friendliness, accessibility to fellow lecturers and students, exemplary scholarship, and balanced approach to the responsibilities of teaching, research and faculty administration.

Collaboration with other Africanist Scholars

McCracken was humble, and mindful of the work and interests of others. This particular attribute made it relatively easy for him to get along with others and forge collaborative networks with them. The broadness of his research interests was also a major factor in this. In

⁷ John McCracken, "African History in British Universities: Past, Present and Future," *African Affairs*, Vol. 92, 1993, pp. 239-253.

this section of the chapter, attention is drawn to several collaborative partnerships he was able to maintain on and off with fellow Africanists in Malawi and Britain.

The first collaborative partnerships he had with Malawian professionals worth citing was that with Dr. Paul Lihoma, the current Director of the Malawi National Archives. For several years during the first decade of this century, the two of them collaborated at raising funds for improving facilities and management at the Zomba National Archives. This involved drafting project proposals for soliciting funding from UNESCO in Paris and NORAD in Norway. We noted some improvement in the delivery of archival services in Malawi as a result of the investment of funds from the initiative involved.

Another partnership to recall is that which involves collaboration with Professor Wapulumuka Oliver Mulwafu of Chancellor College, University of Malawi. This involved the study and examination of colonial conservation policies and projects, and the impact they had. The collaborators closely examined the policies and the projects in question as they applied to Misuku Hills in Northern Malawi, the Lilongwe and Dowa plains in the Central Region, and the Shire Highlands and Lower Shire Valley in the South.⁸ The overall conclusion they reached was that the colonial conservation policies of the time (1920s to 1950s) had limited positive impact because colonial planners and technologists did not take local knowledge and interests into account.

McCracken also collaborated with the first Malawian professional historian, Professor Owen Jatu Kalinga. This was in the mid to late

⁸ John McCracken, "Colonization, Capitalism and Ecological Crisis in Malawi," in David Anderson and Richard Grove (eds), *Conservation in Africa: People, Policies and Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, pp. 63-77; Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu, "Soil Erosion and State Intervention in State Production in the Shire Highlands Economy of Colonial Malawi, 1891-1964," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2002, pp. 25-44.

1990s, when both turned to the study of anti-colonial resistance movements out of which the movement for independence drew its support. They in particular used the agitations that occurred in the 1950s in the present day districts of Karonga and Chitipa as a window through which to chart the dynamics of Malawian nationalism at the time.⁹ To that effect, they drew attention to the transformative role that was played by socio-economic enterprises as well as by leaders who were exposed to nationalist movements through labour migration to Tanganyika, Southern Rhodesia and South Africa.

And last but not least on the Malawian front, there was the collaboration which this writer had with McCracken on at least two occasions - 1996 to 1998 and 2008 to 2012. In 1996, Professor McCracken and Professor Terence Ranger raised some funds in Britain for a project the aim of which was to trace the historical roots of Democracy in Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe (the Old British Central Africa). Our collaboration involved mobilization of a team of researchers, organizing a conference or conferences, and publishing a volume or two. For two years the project did take off and yielded some significant results in the form of a conference that was held at the University of Zimbabwe in August 1997 and at least two publications by McCracken and myself.¹⁰

⁹ John McCracken, "Ambiguities of Nationalism: Flax Musopole and the Northern Factor in Malawian Politics, 1956-1966," *Journal of Southern Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2002, pp. 67-87; Owen J.M. Kalunga, "Understanding the Nyasaland State Emergency in the Old Karonga Districts," in Kings M. Phiri, John McCracken and Wapu O. Mulwafu (eds), *Malawi in Crisis: the 1959/60 Nyasaland State of Emergency and its Legacy*, Zomba: Kachere, 2012, pp. 16-54.

¹⁰ John McCracken, "Democracy and Nationalism in Historical Perspective: the Case of Malawi," *African Affairs*, Vol. 97, 1998, pp. 231-249; Kings M. Phiri, "Pre-colonial States of Central Africa: Embodiments of Despotism Culture?" in Ngwabi Bhebe and Terence Ranger (eds), *The Historical Dimensions of Democracy and Human Rights in Central Africa*, Harare: University of Zimbabwe Publications, 2001, pp. 1-10.

The other opportunity I had of collaborating with McCracken occurred in 2008 to 2012, when he joined us in the History Department of Chancellor College, University of Malawi, for the purpose of organizing an international conference of "The Nyasaland State of Emergency of 1959/60." The conference was a success, and in its aftermath, a volume was edited and published by Professors McCracken, Mulwafu and myself.¹¹

In Britain, the list of fellow Africanists with whom McCracken collaborated from time to time was substantial. It included such illustrious Africanists of the 1960s to 1990s as Professor Terence Ranger of Oxford University with whom McCracken collaborated, research wise, on the broad theme of "African Religion and Politics"; Professor William Beinart of Bristol University, on "Conservation Policies and Practices in Africa"; Professor George Shepperson of Edinburgh University, on "The Role and Impact of Scottish Missionaries in African History."

Those of us who had this kind of interaction with McCracken benefited immensely and learned a lot from him. We appreciated his patience with those who appeared to be struggling; his keenness to learn from the insights of others; his insistence on making adequate use of available sources for whatever subject was being studied; and his willingness, where necessary, to adjust the timeframe for completing a project.

Interpretation of Malawi's Historical Experience

The one thing for which McCracken will be remembered most was that he was a consummate scholar whose analysis and interpretation of Malawi's history is likely to stand the test of time. Over a period of fifty years, from 1968 to 2017, he doggedly focused on researching and writing about Malawi's past, and in the process published three

¹¹ Kings M. Phiri, John McCracken, and Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu (eds), *Malawi in Crisis: the 1959/60 Nyasaland State of Emergency and its Legacy*, Zomba: Kachere, 2012.

volumes and over thirty journal articles and book chapters. In the process, he distinguished himself as one of the most accomplished professional producers of historical knowledge about Malawi. According to one informed observer, McCracken's examination and interpretation of Malawi's historical experience was encompassing and complex. It touched on such varied aspects of the country's development overtime as politics, religion, education, economy, environmental change and ethnicity.¹²

Indeed, I would argue, in corroboration, that there was a remarkable sophistication about McCracken's scholarship, at the level of content and analysis of whatever subject or theme he was addressing. He was meticulous in defining the issues, using available sources, and balanced in marrying fact and theory.

The first of his books, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1876-1940: the Impact of Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), is what distinguished McCracken as a master Craftsman-in-the-making in the production of African historical knowledge. A revision of the PhD thesis he submitted to Cambridge University in 1967, it was conceived as an African-oriented history of Malawi in which Scottish and African agents of change were given equal weight. It turned out to be one of the two best scholarly works on the political and church history of Malawi!¹³

It presented a lucid and critical account and analysis of the development of Christianity and Western Education in Malawi, in the context of 19th century political and socio-economic changes, from the late 19th to the mid-20th century. The book covers six key themes about the Christian Missionary Project and the impact it had on

¹² The volumes in question being: *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940: the Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Cambridge University Press, 1977; *A History of Malawi, 1859-1966*, Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012; and *Voices from the Chilembwe Rising*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015.

¹³ Mwayi Lusaka, "McCracken: A Life of Making Malawi's History," *Weekend Nation*, Blantyre: Nation Publications, 9 December 2017, pp. 20-21.

northern Malawian societies during the period it covers. These include: the role that was played by growing Christian commerce and industry in Scotland; factors that facilitated or militated against the advancement of missionary work among the Tonga and Ngoni of late 19th century northern Malawi; the progress of Western Education that began with the favourable disposition of the Tonga and Henga of the present-day Nkhatabay and Rumphi districts respectively; and the economic impact which the Mission had among those that were educated by its schools. The book also deals with the first generation of mission educated Malawians and the role which the Mission played in moulding a generation of educated and Christianized "New Men" who went on to play an influential role in the making of modern Malawi.

McCracken's other influential book is *A History of Malawi, 1859-1966* (Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012). This is a massive narrative and analysis of the colonial project in Malawi - one which traces the country's political and socio-economic development, from the time of Dr David Livingstone's missionary explorations in the mid-19th century to the country's attainment of independence from British colonial rule in the mid-1960s. It is in the main a synthesis and update of material on various themes in the colonial history of Malawi, a number of which McCracken addressed in numerous journal articles and book chapters published between 1977 and 2008.

Besides providing an interpretive account of colonial administrative and economic policies and the impact they had on Malawians of the time, the book incorporates several new perspectives and themes about the colonial experience in Malawi. These include: the development of urban centres; movement for restoration of African ethnic identities; struggles for the environmental control; the broadening of a modern health care system; emergence of labour organizations; and post-war policies and debates for addressing the problem of poverty.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of McCracken's scholarship is how he identified and then went on to research on and write about

themes and issues of wider and comparative historiographical significance or relevance, especially in the period following the rise of the "Critical School of African History" in the 1970s. This was a school which incorporated the experiences, initiatives and struggles of ordinary people, as opposed to elites and the ruling classes in general.¹⁴ McCracken's focus on such relatively new themes and issues included a study of the colonial state in Central Africa, the colonial economy, food security and the environment, and the masses in the growth of African nationalism. The rest of this chapter is devoted to presenting a summary of the contribution McCracken made to our understanding of such relatively new themes in the study and writing of African and Malawian history in general and Malawian history in particular.

One of the revisited themes in the study and interpretation of which McCracken produced some original insights is that of the colonial state as it evolved in the former British Central Africa (present day Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe). His re-examination of how the colonial state evolved here from 1890 to 1945 revealed that the colonial system as a whole was geared to maintenance of European supremacy at the expense of African development. To that effect, prominent traditional authorities were coopted and used as state collaborators and minions, Africans were generally excluded from vital legislative and executive positions in government, and they were discriminated against on racial grounds in major centres of colonial state administration, such as towns and industrial sites. And what is more, the colonial system was based on prioritizing investment in institutions for maintaining law and order, such as the army, the police, the prisons, labour compounds, etc., at the expense of investment in social services that African communities needed the

¹⁴ The other being George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African: John Chilembwe and the Nyasaland Rising of 1915*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1958.

most, such as education, health care, agricultural and home making schools.¹⁵

And, in his analysis of the colonial state in Malawi, McCracken amplified this kind of analysis and interpretation. He demonstrated that the colonial government was a law and order system which revolved around instruments of coercion and control. For example, with the support of the colonial police force, the state was able to mobilize tax revenue from the countryside, recruit by force labour for European enterprises in the Shire Highlands, and subdue local authorities who still resisted the establishment and consolidation of colonial authority.¹⁶

Our historical knowledge of Malawi was also greatly enriched by McCracken's study of how the colonial economy developed. This was particularly so of his research and writings on the sectors of peasant agriculture and fishing on Lake Nyasa (Lake Malawi) and Lake Chilwa.

He demonstrated how African peasant farming remained under-developed up to 1945, because of ambivalent government policies and practices that the marketing boards of the time pursued. Farming fortunes for Africans, so McCracken argued, only began to improve after World War II, following the introduction of reforms that were directed at supporting African production of tobacco, maize and groundnuts for the market.¹⁷

¹⁵ As elaborated in Michael Adas, "Social History and Revolution in Africa and Asian Historiography," *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 1985, pp. 335-348; and Peter Burke (ed), *New Perspectives on Historical Writing*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991.

¹⁶ John McCracken, "British Central Africa, 1905-1940," in A.D. Roberts (ed), *Cambridge History of Africa*, Vol. 7, 1986, pp. 602-633.

¹⁷ McCracken, "Coercion and Control in Nyasaland: Aspects of the History of a Colonial Police Force," *Journal of African History* (hereafter *JAH*), Vol. 9, No. 2, 1983, pp. 172-192.

As for the development and contribution of the fishing industry, McCracken appraised the role that was played by Yao headmen along the southern shores of Lake Nyasa, as well as that which Greek entrepreneurs and migrant Tonga fishermen from Nkhatabay played. Equally important was the expansion of the markets for both fresh and smoked fish around the towns of Zomba and Blantyre from 1914 to 1964.

Also featured in McCracken's study of the fishing industry in Malawi during the colonial period was his assessment of the impact it had on Malawi's economy as a whole. This included the fact that the industry injected cash incomes into lakeside communities, was crucial to integrating economies of lakeside and upland plateau communities in the Central and Southern parts of the country, and helped to meet protein needs in the diet of estate workers in the Shire Highlands.¹⁸

McCracken will also be remembered by consumers of historical knowledge about Malawi, for his profound study and analysis of natural resource conservation campaign and the impact it had on food security concerns during the colonial period.

With reference to Northern Malawi, for example, he demonstrated how perceptions of environmental degradation and its negative impact on food security began with the early missionaries and colonial administrators. These attributed the deterioration of the Malawian environment to bush fires, the wanton cutting down of trees, shifting cultivation and overgrazing. The results of such harmful environmental practices, so they maintained, included soil erosion, decline of rainfall, lowering of the water table, and dwindling of food production. McCracken also indicated that as a remedial measures, colonial administrators and technocrats advocated the adoption of contour ridging and bunding, terrace growing of cash

¹⁸ McCracken, "Fishing and the Colonial Economy: The Case of Malawi," *JAH*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1987, pp. 413-429.

crops and fruit trees, and the creation of forest reserves. The assessment and conclusions reached about the impact of these measures had on food security, however, were negative. And, what is more, the measures occasioned hardship and induced widespread resistance from the local peasant population.¹⁹

Also worth considering was McCracken's examination of how the African nationalist movement of the 1950s in Malawi was transformed from an elite inspired and controlled movement to a peasant dominated one.

He used Northern Malawi as a case study, to illustrate how the elite-controlled nationalist movement of the 1940s and early 1950s was transformed into a militant, peasant or mass-based movement that boasted of about 48 branches by 1958. The assessment reached was that the stimulus to the upsurge of nationalist sentiment and activity, that was evident then, was rooted in the day to day experiences of the peasantry. In particular, the nationalist leaders in question were able to mobilize massive support for the cause by their criticism of the colonial government's natural resources conservation policies and the harsh manner in which they were implemented.²⁰

Legacy

The forgoing discourse about the life and work of the late Professor John McCracken as I knew him has established that he was a complex subject from whom we have many lessons to learn. In this concluding section of the chapter, however, we confine ourselves to only four aspects of what should be remembered about him: the quality and depth of his scholarship; the way he collaborated with other academics in Malawi and Britain; his love for Malawi and her people; and the

¹⁹ McCracken, "Conservation and Resistance in Colonial Northern Malawi," in John McCracken et al (eds), *Twentieth Century Malawi: Perspectives on History and Culture*, Edinburgh: Astron Group of Publishers, 2001, pp. 38-57.

²⁰ McCracken, "The Ambiguities of Nationalism: Jacob Flax Musopole and the Northern Factor in Malawian Politics, 1956-1966," *JSAS*, No. 1, 2002, pp. 67-79.

hospitality he extended to those of us who called on him in Scotland and Malawi.

In his books, book chapters and journal articles, McCracken left us a massive body of well researched and packaged material on the history of Malawi, for use by present as well as future generations of students and scholars in general.

He was someone who set a good example of collaboration between Western and African academics or scholars. To Malawian scholars like this writer, he was a caring and motivating collaborator. Working with him was truly an edifying experience. We were inspired by his keenness to learn from the insights of those he was collaborating with, insistence on making adequate use of available sources on whatever subject was being tackled; and willingness, where necessary, to adjust the timeframe of a collaborative effort.

He loved Malawi and her people. To that effect, he seized every opportunity he could get for coming to Malawi, for research, a teaching appointment, reconnection with those he had befriended over the years, or for a mere visit.

And he was, in a variety of locations, an unfailingly hospitable Malawianist. One thinks of his home at Doune in Scotland or along Kufa Road in Zomba, Malawi, which was open for hosting numerous colleagues and friends from Malawi, Britain and other parts of the world.

John McCracken and the Development of Malawian Historiography, 1964 - 2017

Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu

Introduction

It is a well-known fact that John McCracken's research contributed significantly to the development of Malawi's historiography. McCracken, who died in October 2017, should be appropriately remembered as one of the few scholars who consistently wrote on Malawi's history over a period of forty years, and yet many of his works remain as refreshing as ever. This chapter examines McCracken's contribution not only to the production of historical knowledge in Malawi, but also his influence on scholarship more generally. It shows that in the period prior to the early 1980s, much of the historical writing tended to focus on the all too familiar themes of political, economic and religious history. However, it was in the early 1980s that a new direction in scholarship began to be charted. By delving into such areas of research as the impact of policy frameworks and historical experiences of those affected by state institutions in agriculture, commerce, and armed forces for instance, he provided a direction that many subsequent scholars would either follow or engage with. At the risk of oversimplifying matters, his influence can be summarized in three aspects: opening up new themes of scholarship, introducing multiple or alternative perspectives to the master narrative, and promoting the documentation of Malawi's historical knowledge. We discuss these aspects in detail in the rest of the chapter.

Shaping New Areas of Research

It is becoming increasingly rare in African historical study today to find scholars who have dedicated almost their entire careers to studying histories of individual countries. To a large extent that is the

hallmark of pioneer Africanists of the early post-colonial period such as Terence Ranger, John Lonsdale, Ivor Wilks, Robert Maxon, Gideon Were and Bethwell Ogot. That generation of scholars is disappearing and, as African history has become much more complex, a different kind of scholarship is taking shape. Their work coincided not only with the development of African history as a professional discipline but also the birth of nation states. It was appealing to scholars to demonstrate the richness of Africa's pre-colonial past that in some ways compared with developments in other parts of the worlds. Subscribing to the nationalist paradigm of historical scholarship, these initial studies contributed significantly to the generation of knowledge about the African past. But, by the early 1980s, McCracken had virtually shifted to the social history perspective, where he was able to engage with broader scholarship on themes that were in vogue then, including race, class, ethnicity and gender as well as application of the underdevelopment theory in particular contexts. By discussing McCracken's research interests and publications in this manner we are able to appreciate the growth of historical knowledge over time and how this has shaped Malawi's historical scholarship.

Prior to the late 1970s, scholarship focused on a limited number of themes: missionary influence, trade and politics and ethnic histories. Many historians produced their dissertations and monographs around these key themes. McCracken joined the team of historians by writing on the contribution of the Livingstonia Mission to education and politics of the territory. At that time, his work fitted perfectly within the parameters of the existing state of historical knowledge but he was quick to diversify to other emerging areas. This is where his contribution to and influence on the development of Malawi's historiography will be better understood.

It is perhaps difficult, if not presumptuous, to attribute influence to the work of specific individuals. But looking at the extent of citations and the debates based on McCracken's writings we believe that his works may have influenced some scholars in different ways. His

book, *A History of Malawi, 1859-1966* produced after years of extensive research and writing has become a standard textbook for teaching history in many higher education institutions in Malawi. Over and above academic publications, he also wrote for the average readership and his writing style is highly accessible. In this connection, he was a regular contributor to the country's oldest historical journal, the *Society of Malawi Journal* and on several occasions gave public talks to the forum. Apart from this local outlet, he also published in leading international journals of African scholarship such as the *Journal of Southern African Studies*, *Journal of African History* and *African Affairs*. We will now turn our attention to the analysis of specific areas where his influence was felt.

Missionary Factor

At the beginning of his academic career in the 1960s, McCracken worked on the history of missionaries and their influence on the making of the nation of Malawi. In particular, he focused on the role of Scottish missionaries who settled in northern Malawi and pointed out a number of transformative effects in such areas as health and education. In addition, he showed how mission-educated Africans became actively involved in politics of the time.¹ But McCracken was critical of the role of missionaries themselves as agents of Western civilization. He argued that the spread of Western civilization had limits and indeed experienced challenges regarding what could be done to change the lives of Africans. By paying particular attention

¹ McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940: the Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*; K.J. McCracken, "Religion and Politics in Northern Ngoniland, 1881-1904." in Bridglal Pachai (ed), *The Early History of Malawi*, London: Longman, 1972, pp. 215-236; John McCracken, "African Politics in Twentieth-century Malawi" in Terence O. Ranger (ed), *Aspects of Central African History*, London: Heinemann, 1968; John McCracken, "Scottish Medical Missionaries in Central Africa" *The Scottish Society of the History of Medicine*, Vol. 17, (1973), pp. 188-191; McCracken, "Underdevelopment in Malawi: the Missionary Contribution." *African Affairs*, Vol. 76, No. 303, (1977), pp. 195-209.

to the interests of Africans, one is able to understand their reaction to missionary presence in specific historical contexts. Like Leroy Vail and Robin Palmer, he also contributed to the debate in vogue in the 1970s about the underdevelopment of African societies and for his part this related more specifically to missionary activities.² Probably influenced by ideas from the Dar-es-Salaam School of African history, McCracken viewed Christianity as a major agent for development of socio-economic differentiation and the creation of elite groups some of which pursued very different agendas from those promoted by Christianity. Scholars who have written on the theme of missionary enterprise include Markku Hokkanen who keenly followed the medical contribution of missionaries and the networks they created to achieve their objectives. There has been a flurry of both undergraduate and postgraduate dissertations at the University of Malawi and other institutions where researchers have engaged with McCracken on this theme.³

Development and the Impact of Nationalism

A second major theme concerns the development of African nationalism which eventually led to the independence of Malawi in 1964. In line with trends elsewhere on the African continent, McCracken was particularly attentive to the voices of silenced Africans in the nationalist struggle. While featuring national figures was in itself a good idea for the production of national histories and the master narrative, he spent time unearthing the experiences of a number of the erstwhile unknown actors.⁴ Operating at different levels of society, Africans

² R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds) *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, London: Heinemann, 1977.

³ In the Departments of History and Theology and Religious Studies at the University of Malawi as well as Mzuzu University, many students have written on various aspects of missionary enterprise in areas such as education, health and politics.

⁴ See Robert Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: The Making of Malawi and Zambia, 1873-1964*, London: OUP, 1966; Peter G. Forster,

from different backgrounds did much to shape and transform their political and socio-economic conditions. While religion and education played an important role in conscientizing Africans, McCracken also traced the roots of nationalism to activities of Africans in urban areas. These were areas which brought together elites and educated members of society and provided an opportunity for them to share their experiences under colonialism. He therefore followed closely the accounts of some residents of Blantyre Township to demonstrate how urban centres produced different dynamics to the emerging politics within the context of a predominantly rural society.⁵ The rise of a new class of local entrepreneurs such as Lawrence Makata and Lali Lubani had an effect on changing the nature of politics in Blantyre, particularly in the post-war period. On this subject, McCracken may be interpreted to have been sympathetic to the Marxist approach of avoiding the tendency to homogenize the Africans as one group with similar needs and interests. Instead, he analyzed the background of nationalist leaders in terms of their gender and class interests which to a large extent affected their participation in the nationalist movement.

Nationalism did not just change the practice of politics in colonial Malawi but also affected other aspects of social life for Africans such as the response to state sponsored soil conservation programmes. In this regard, he explained ways in which the nationalist movement took advantage of growing rural opposition to the anti-erosion drive to advance their own political interests. Rural peasant grievances were

"Culture, Nationalism, and the Invention of Tradition in Malawi." *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3, (1994), pp. 477-97.

⁵ See the following works by John McCracken, "Democracy and Nationalism in Historical Perspective: the Case of Malawi." *African Affairs*, Vol. 97, No. 2, (1998), pp. 231-249; "Blantyre Transformed: Class, Conflict and Nationalism in Urban Malawi." *Journal of African History*, Vol. 39, No. 2, (1998), pp. 247-269; "The Ambiguities of Nationalism: Flax Musopole and the Northern Factor in Malawian Politics, c.1956-1966." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, (2002), pp. 67-87.

turned into a key agenda for anti-colonial resistance in the 1950s. As early as 1982, McCracken was among the first scholars to argue that colonial knowledge and expertise left much to be desired in developing a coherent and effective programme of national conservation. That expertise was in some cases based on wrong assumptions or inadequate understanding of the existing local conditions. The pilot schemes established in places such as Thyolo in the 1930s were either met with African resistance or limited financial support and ended up fading away.⁶

Another dimension to his research focused on the role of northerners in Malawi's politics. Partly because of the missionary influence and partly because of limited economic opportunities, the northern factor was as critical in shaping the direction of politics in the nationalist era as it was to become after independence. A number of teachers, government civil servants and ministers educated at Livingstonia Mission participated in the establishment of early pressure groups. They played an active role in the period of native associations through the Nyasaland African Congress and eventually the formation of the Malawi Congress Party. These included Levi Mumba, George Simeon Mwase, Kanyama Chiume and Orton and Vera Chirwa. But one maverick individual who seems to have attracted McCracken's special interest is Flax Katoba Musopole on whom he published a fair amount of work regarding his political influence in northern Malawi.⁷ Joey Power is one of the scholars who have pursued the theme of

⁶ John McCracken, "Experts and Expertise in Colonial Malawi," *African Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 322 (1982), pp. 101-116. A similar argument has also been raised by Beinart in the context of southern Africa more generally. See W. Beinart, K. Brown and D. Gilfoyle, "Experts and Expertise in Colonial Africa Reconsidered: Science and the Interpenetration of Knowledge" *African Affairs*, Vol. 108, No. 432, (2009), pp. 413-433.

⁷ McCracken's publications on Katoba include John McCracken, "The Ambiguities of Nationalism: Flax Musopole and the Northern Factor in Malawian Politics, c.1956-1966." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, (2002), pp. 67-87.

politics and nationalism in Malawi and in the process explains the role of urbanization and mission educated Africans.⁸ Owen Kalinga has similarly decried the tendency to focus on elites while neglecting the contributions of many low-key figures who were central to the success of the nationalist movement.

African Production Systems

Another theme emerging from McCracken's research concerned the kind of opportunities and constraints applied to African producers by the expanding colonial relations. By studying the experiences of peasants, particularly in southern and central parts of the territory, he showed how their livelihoods began to change under state induced production and marketing conditions. It is a well-known fact that the African encounter with colonialism resulted in socio-economic differentiation.⁹ While some producers benefitted in terms of access to markets and improved commodity prices, others lost out through land dispossession and control over labour.¹⁰ This has been a subject of much scholarly discussion in Malawi and Africa generally. The adoption of tobacco production by African farmers demonstrates the

⁸ See Joey Power, *Building Kwacha: Political Culture and Nationalism in Malawi*, Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2010; Joey Power, "Building Relevance: The Blantyre Congress, 1953 to 1956." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, (2002), pp. 45-65.

⁹ See J.A.K. Kandawire, *Thangata: Forced Labour or Reciprocal Assistance*, Zomba: University of Malawi, 1979; Robin Palmer, "White Farmers in Malawi: Before and After the Depression." *African Affairs*, Vol. 84 (1985), pp. 211-245; Robin Palmer, "The Nyasaland Tea Industry in the Era of International Tea Restrictions 1933-1950." *Journal of African History*, Vol. 26, No. 2, (1985), pp. 215-239; Robin Palmer, "Working Conditions and Worker Responses on Nyasaland Tea Estates 1930-1955." *Journal of African History*, Vol. 27, No. 1, (1986), pp. 105-126.

¹⁰ See Bridglal Pachai, *Land and Politics in Malawi, 1875-1975*, Kingston, Ont: Limestone Press, 1978; John McCracken, "Planters, Peasants and the Colonial State: The Impact of the Native Tobacco Board in the Central Province of Malawi." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 9 (1983), pp. 172-192.

strategies through which European settlers sought to control the labour and marketing of the crop. As other scholars have shown, McCracken argued that the role of the state was uneven and often changed with time to suit specific circumstances, particularly in the provision of markets for African produced crops.¹¹ For example, after the end of the infamous *thangata* system, new forms of labour control emerged on European settler estates which were described as visiting tenancy and share-cropping systems.¹² This was an arrangement whereby Africans were allowed to use land belonging to European settlers on condition that they would sell part of their produce to the estate owner. In most cases, however, African peasants were provided with inputs on credit whose recovery was done at the point of harvest. While helpful in meeting labour demands on the estates, these labour arrangements were not altogether benign. Instead, they were to become subtly oppressive and, in many ways, crucial strategies to the survival of the fledgling estate farming sector. Analyses of the practice of these labour regimes can be seen in the studies of Elias Mandala on cotton production in the Shire Valley,

¹¹ John McCracken, "Planters, Peasants and the Colonial State: the Impact of the Native Tobacco Board in the Central Province of Malawi." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, (1983), pp. 172-192; John McCracken, *Journal of East African Research and Development*, Vol. 12, (1982), pp. 21-35; John McCracken, "Share-cropping in Malawi: the Visiting Tenant System in the Central Province, c. 1920-1968." Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1985; John McCracken, "Experts and Expertise in Colonial Malawi." *African Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 322, (1982), pp. 101-116.

¹² Wiseman Chirwa, "Child and Youth Labour on the Nyasaland Plantations, 1890-1953." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4, (1993), pp. 662-680; Tony Woods, "Capitaos and Chiefs: Oral Tradition and Colonial Society in Malawi." *International Journal of African Historical Society* Vol. 23, No. 2 (1990), pp. 259-268; McCracken, "Sharecropping in Malawi: The Visiting Tenant System in the Central Province, c.1920-1968." Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 1985.

Wiseman Chirwa on youth and child labour, and Tony Woods' analysis of relations between planters and Africans.

Coercion, Control and Resistance

A critical assessment of state policies and practices and their impact on various groups of people emerged as another of McCracken's thematic areas. While the colonial states in Africa had often been presented as being disproportionately too powerful, their capacity for policy enforcement was limited by many factors not least of which was the lack of human and financial resources. The Nyasaland colonial state was under-capitalized throughout much of the colonial period and this affected the manner in which policies and programmes could be executed. This situation also exposed the fragility of the state which was heavily dependent on external sources of funding for implementing its major programmes. From the beginning, the Nyasaland government under Johnston received financial support of £10,000 per year from Cecil Rhodes. Later, the government received remittances from labour migrants in South Africa and Southern Rhodesia which at the time of independence accounted for almost a quarter of the national budget. Another case in point is the construction of transport infrastructure that was much slower compared to other colonial territories in southern Africa. Elias Mandala argued that colonialists "taxed everything, so that the very people who had clamoured for Her Majesty's protection soon questioned the wisdom of the scheme."¹³ In the end, the railways project became a symbol of underdevelopment for colonial Malawi.¹⁴

¹³ Elias Mandala, "Feeding and Fleecing the Native: How the Nyasaland Transport System Distorted a New Food Market, 1890s-1920s." *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (2006), pp. 505-24.

¹⁴ Leroy Vail, "The Making of an Imperial Slum: Nyasaland and its Railway 1895-1935." *Journal of African History*, Vol. 16, (1975), pp. 89-112; Leroy Vail, "Railway Development and Colonial Underdevelopment: The Nyasaland Case."

In addition, the state of emergency of 1959, revealed the state's inadequate capacity to deal with the mass protests. As a result, security forces were mobilized from Southern Rhodesia to assist in quelling the protests. A police force contingent of 2,000 was too small to deal with security matters in the territory. The ineffectiveness of the state apparatus was particularly evident in times of African resistance to the colonial system.¹⁵ A particularly thrilling aspect here was McCracken's insightful analysis of the plight of African nationalists in detention camps in Malawi and Southern Rhodesia. He drew parallels on the forms of treatment with their counterparts in Kenya during the Mau Mau protests of the 1950s. This theme has attracted the interest of scholars like Tim Stapleton, Philip Murphy and Wapu Mulwafu who have each written on African response to state repressive policies. Equally developed in the literature is the subject of the state's use of disproportionate security measures to clamp down on different forms of resistance.

Ecological Changes, Economy and Society

When social history had long demonstrated the existence of unequal relationships between the colonizers and colonized, radical scholars extended the analysis to the consequences of colonialism on the African environment. Initially, the main argument was that colonialism and capitalism had not only disturbed African production systems but also upset harmonious relations between Africans themselves and their environments. In East Africa, for instance, John

in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds), *The Roots of Rural Poverty*, London: Heinemann, 1977, pp. 365–395.

¹⁵ John McCracken, "Authority and Legitimacy in Malawi: Policing and Politics in a Colonial State." in David Anderson and David Killingray (eds), *Policing and Decolonization: Nationalism, Politics and the Police, 1917-1965*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992, pp. 158-86; John McCracken, "Coercion and Control in Nyasaland: Aspects of the History of a Colonial Police Force." *Journal of African History*, Vol. 27, No. 1, (1987), pp. 127-147.

Iliffe, Helge Kjekshus and others argued that the onset of German and British colonial systems supplanted the disease environment which resulted in the unleashing of new diseases as well as those that had long been held under control. In applying the analytical framework to the Malawian context McCracken similarly examined the consequences of the expanding capitalist agriculture and game hunting policies which led to the tsetse fly spread in central Malawi. Several papers on the relationship between humans and nature emerged. At the same time, he provided a historically grounded context to the work of Laurens van der Post on the proposed plans to establish a national park on the Nyika plateau whose aim was to preserve wildlife.¹⁶

What this scholarship showed is that there was an emerging historical analysis of the relationship between human beings and the environment which had previously not been adequately documented, yet its impact was significant to understanding social change. The conservation of natural resources provided an opportunity for scholars to explain not only relationships between humans and nature but also between the colonizers and the colonized. While the introduction of conservation was applauded as a high point of the colonial efforts to protect the environment, Africans in some parts of the country resisted. Their voices were rarely heard in public but their actions were often vented out during the height of the nationalist struggle. That connection was insightfully explored by McCracken in his various publications of the 1980s and has been discussed by several scholars such as Wapu Mulwafu, Bryson Nkhoma, Wiseman Chirwa, Brian Morris and George Jawali.¹⁷

¹⁶ John McCracken, "Imagining the Nyika Plateau: Laurens van der Post, the Phoka and the Making of a National Park," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 4, (2006), pp. 807-821.

¹⁷ John McCracken, "Colonialism, Capitalism and Ecological Crisis in Malawi: a Reassessment." in David Anderson and Richard Grove (eds), *Conservation in Africa: People, Politics and Practice*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, reprinted 1989, pp. 63-77; John McCracken, "Conservation and

Interrogating the Master Narrative

The second aspect concerned history of individuals and groups that were not part of mainstream historical narratives. Prior to the 1990s, the history of minority groups had not been adequately explored in the Malawian context although attention to marginalized groups had received some attention.¹⁸ The historical tradition at the time tended to treat people in generalized or homogenized categories as Africans, Asians or Europeans. At most, African people were labelled on the basis of their ethnic origins or linguistic affiliations. Yet there were other differences that marked people such as religion, gender, race and class all of which needed to be untangled and explained.¹⁹ One group that seems to have fascinated McCracken is the Italian immigrant community whose history remained largely unwritten. Though small in number, they established themselves over time to become key players in the economic affairs of the country. Their entrepreneurial operations concentrated in areas of cash crop

Resistance in Colonial Malawi: the 'Dead North' Revisited." in William Beinart and JoAnn McGregor (eds), *Social History and African Environments*, Oxford: James Currey, 2003, pp. 155-174; Brian Morris, *Wildlife and Landscapes in Malawi: Selected Essays in Natural History*, Victoria: Trafford, 2009; Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu, *Conservation Song: A History of Peasant-State Relations and the Environment in Malawi, 1860-2000*, Cambridge: The White Horse Press, 2011.

¹⁸ See Megan Vaughan, "Kinship and Class: Stratification in the Zomba Area of Southern Malawi." Zomba: Chancellor College, History Seminar Paper, 1978; Tony Woods, "The Myth of a Capitalist Class: Unofficial Sources and Political Economy in Colonial Malawi, 1895-1924." *History in Africa*, Vol. 16, (1989), pp. 363-373.

¹⁹ John McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed: Class, Conflict and Nationalism in Urban Malawi." *Journal of African History*, Vol. 39, No. 2, (1998), pp. 247-269; see also Joey Power, "Race, Class, Ethnicity and Anglo-Indian Trade Rivalry in Colonial Malawi, 1910-1945." *International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 26, No. 3, (1993), pp. 575-607.

production, fishing and fish trading, and bakery in southern Malawi.²⁰ This was an example of the changing fortunes of a community which may not have been active politically but was silently involved in capitalist accumulation.

Over and above the main themes that characterized his scholarship, McCracken also wrote on the social history of a number of marginal individuals. The issue of marginal people who had been left out of the mainstream historical narrative occupied a significant share of his research and writing. This took the form of biographical works of individuals who would ordinarily not feature as subjects of historical scholarship. It is clear that while he sympathized with the plight of the underclass, he sought to use history not only to set the record right but also to bring to the fore the unique experiences of the voiceless. For example, he reconstructed the history of such marginal people as Elizabeth Pithie, beleaguered wife to Blantyre missionary Alexander Hetherwick, and Mungo Chisuse, the erstwhile photographer in the early colonial period. There were other individuals who, despite their humble backgrounds, deserved to go down in the annals of history if anything for either having assisted or worked with some of Nyasaland's heroic figures. These included Tom Boquito and one Chuma who worked closely with the pioneer missionaries in the country. Others were products of the Blantyre mission who after receiving their education became small scale capitalist entrepreneurs in their own right. These included Donald Malota, Duncan Njilima, Joseph Bismarck, John Gray Kufa, Gordon and Hugh Makata. They owned land, grew cash crops and ran retail businesses. Perhaps McCracken's concern with marginal people would be incomplete if we don't mention his interest in the work of Peter MacKay, a long

²⁰ John McCracken, "'Economics and Ethnicity: the Italian Community in Malawi', *Journal of African History*, Vol. 32, No. 2, (1991), pp. 313-332; John McCracken, "Family Fortunes: Aspects of the History of the Italian Community in Malawi', *Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 1, (2008), pp. 5-25.

time Southern Rhodesia based activist who provided enormous support to African nationalists in Nyasaland and Southern Rhodesia. In a rather interesting piece McCracken also wrote about the history of the introduction and spread of bicycle transportation in the territory, highlighting its use and value to the ordinary Africans.²¹

McCracken's research often brought out new and interesting perspectives on Malawi's history. Given his concern with giving voices to the under-privileged, I doubt that he would have made a conscious decision to write the history of Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda. Indeed, apart from works that presented Dr Banda as part of the Malawian narrative, particularly during the nationalist phase, there is no single analysis devoted to him. McCracken was probably well aware that although he ruled Malawi for thirty years, Banda was somewhat reticent about his past history. At that time, it was not safe for any scholar to write about Banda's personal history. The experiences of the 1970s where several academics in the University of Malawi were detained without trial and the deportation of foreigners including the journalist Philip Short were too fresh to be ignored.²² Consequently, the little that was written about him was not publicly available to people in the country. Although the situation changed after he left the presidency in 1994, gaps still existed on some personal aspects of his life. McCracken was fortunate to have stumbled on some rare but extant letters of Banda while studying and later practicing medicine in the UK. These letters have provided extremely useful information about Banda's views on controversial issues such as difficulties with medical training in the UK, marriage

²¹ John McCracken, "Bicycles in Colonial Malawi: a Short History." *Society of Malawi Journal* Vol. 64, No. 1, (2011), pp. 1-12.

²² Philip Short, *Banda*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974; David T. Williams, *Malawi: The Politics of Despair*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978; John Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi: A Study in Promise, Power and Paralysis*, Glasgow: Dudu Nsomba Publications, 1993.

plans and relationship with the Presbyterian Church before he returned to Malawi.

Like many other established scholars, McCracken did not restrict his scholarship to writing books and articles in his areas of research only. He also wrote, on a regular basis, reviews of books in which he attempted to contextualize subjects of historical significance. Some of his well-known book reviews concerned the works of Colin Baker, Andrew Ross and George Shepperson. He was in many ways the towering authority for anyone wishing to know the intricacies of Malawi's historical past as well as its contemporary developments.

Passion for Documentation of Malawi's History

The third aspect concerns McCracken's passion for collection and documentation of historical material. Perhaps because of his special interest in the social history of the underclass and marginal people, McCracken was an excellent record keeper of sources on Malawi's history. That McCracken was well read cannot be doubted. Personal interactions with him often brought the feeling that one was dealing with an encyclopaedia of knowledge about Malawi. He had a remarkable memory and had a gifted way of analyzing complex historical developments. In his own works, McCracken used material obtained over many years and these ranged from collections from the archives in London, Edinburgh and Glasgow, the Rhodes Library, the National Archives of Malawi and the Society of Malawi. He was a scholar who easily associated with various individuals working on Malawi and was always ready to help in whatever way he could to access the required information. For example, during the planning phase of the commemorative conference on the 1959 Nyasaland of State of Emergency, McCracken insisted on documenting all information pertaining to the event. His wish was to record eye-witness accounts of people like Rose Chibambo, Vera Chirwa, Austin Mkandawire and Terence Ranger not only for posterity but also as a way of nuancing the narrative of the historical event. To our amazement and delight he made available many old photographs for which

he had detailed information regarding the names of individuals, their positions and the general historical context.

It would be incomplete to talk about the work of McCracken without mentioning the efforts he made in maintaining relations with the Department of History at the University of Malawi. Throughout a forty-year period, he kept regular contact with staff in the department and frequently made available his books and articles. He played a key role in facilitating communication as well as networking with several scholars and former technocrats based in the Western world such as Colin Cameron and Terence Ranger. He was also a valuable link between Chancellor College's Department of History and the *Journal of Southern African Studies*.

Sensitive to the voices of Africans, he went back to the historical sources used in producing the narrative of the Chilembwe Uprising of 1915 and produced an extremely useful source text for current and future students of history. The publication of this detailed source book will certainly change the discourse on the Chilembwe saga as scholars will now have the opportunity to access these sources more easily.

McCracken had gone a long way towards explaining the nature of the contemporary Malawian political tradition by connecting it with the nationalist politics of the pre-independence era. He therefore examined closely the activities of various nationalist individuals and groups and related them to developments after independence. The study of the Mau Mau influence and the role of intelligence networks in regulating activities of the nationalist movement has equally been a subject of historical interest. The use of different techniques such as detention and torture in the 1959/60 Nyasaland State of Emergency drew parallels with the Kenyan pre-independence repression of nationalism. This theme has been taken up by several scholars including Tim Stapleton in his comparative study of coercion in Zimbabwe and

Malawi and Phil Murphy in his analysis of British intelligence systems in colonial societies.²³

Several scholars have written about McCracken's involvement in the Scotland-Malawi relations. Coming as it did in the twilight of his academic career, this formalized partnership would benefit immensely from his deep historical knowledge. Kenneth Ross, in particular, has argued that although he preferred to work in the background, he was an invaluable source of information. In some ways, this was confirmed when he returned to the History Department at Chancellor College in 2008, as a visiting professor and after retiring from Stirling University. During his stint at Chancellor College he worked fervently with the Department to strengthen relations with Scotland and other British universities. Again, the case of the Nyasaland State of Emergency conference best illustrates this point. He was particularly instrumental in identifying eye witnesses and keynote speakers, lobbying for funding, preparation of a photo display and publication of papers in both JSAS and the edited volume. Another interesting aspect is that he was particularly keen on getting a new generation of Malawian scholars to interface with senior ones and get them to write on themes of interest to the conference. While the conference was open to participants from within and outside Malawi, he expressed the desire to see this event as not just a purely academic exercise. He emphasized the need to make space for eye-witness accounts from those individuals who had lived through the event.

McCracken was not unaware of his own scholarly limitations. One of the themes least developed throughout his own research is gender relations. Although he discussed the experiences of some women

²³ John McCracken, www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03057070.2011.602894. " *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 3, (2011), pp. 535-50. See also Tim Stapleton, "'Bad Boys': Infiltration and Sedition in the African Military Units of the Central African Federation (Malawi, Zambia and Zimbabwe) 1953-63." *The Journal of Military History*, Vol. 73, No. 4, (2009), pp.1167-1193. Stapleton, T.J., *African Soldiers and Police in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1923-1980* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2011).

characters in his books and articles, there is lack of systematic engagement with gender at both theoretical and empirical levels. But it is pleasing to note that several scholars have recently developed interest and are actively pursuing research on this subject. Secondly, he rarely used oral sources, a methodological approach which had been promoted by many of his contemporary Africanists. Instead, he relied a great deal on archival sources as his primary sources of information.

Conclusion

What does McCracken's work mean for historical scholarship in Malawi and beyond? First, it provides an important entry point into the understanding of African experiences often neglected by colonial structures of power. As in many other societies, the history of colonized people was only partially documented. Even where that had been done, African peoples tended to be homogenized and little effort was made to understand their differentiated experiences whether on the basis of class, gender or ethnicity. Second, it gives agency to African people many of whom did not have opportunities to express their views. By focusing on Africans as subjects of history, they are not just objects of historical developments initiated by other groups. On the contrary, they are themselves actors and shapers of their destinies at different historical junctures.

McCracken should be remembered as a dynamic scholar who could write on virtually any topic with an incredible amount of historical detail. Over the years he had accumulated a considerable amount of knowledge about Malawi and the region in general. His meticulous style of writing assured readers that he produced well researched books and papers. At a personal level, those who knew and interacted with him will undoubtedly testify to his generosity in sharing sources of information. At a time when writing about Malawi was politically sensitive and, particularly during Banda's one-party state, he kept the tradition of historical scholarship running. Some historians had either been banned from coming to Malawi or had simply given up in

protest. By reading McCracken's works, one is able to appreciate Malawi's position in its regional and continental perspectives.

In the last forty years, Malawi's historical scholarship has evolved into a complex and multi-dimensional area of study. Obviously, we now know a lot more about the country than at any other point before. The number of scholars working on Malawi has generally increased and so has the range of themes being studied. Scholarship has diversified beyond nation-based histories and now tends to engage with wider themes and developments in other parts of the world.

Medicine, Politics and Christian Networks: John McCracken and the Historiography of Medicine in Malawi

Markku Hokkanen

Historians, Medicine and Politics in Malawi

In 1973 John McCracken highlighted some promising research themes related to the history of medicine and health in colonial Malawi: histories of medical research, training of African medical staff, and the importance of nutrition and economic changes (including the impact(s) of migrant labour).¹ This essay will reflect upon the historiography of medicine in Malawi and illuminate how subsequent research has addressed some of the questions McCracken raised in his early paper on Scottish medical missionaries.

A historical study of medicine, health and healing can easily begin to edge into politics, religion, intellectual life and culture in a more general sense.² This has been perhaps particularly apparent in the careers of three pivotal figures in the region: David Livingstone, Hastings Kamuzu Banda and Robert Laws who combined medicine (all were trained doctors) with influential interdisciplinary careers that crossed continents and impacted upon politics, culture and society widely.³ Although from different eras, these three physicians' lives

¹ John McCracken, "Scottish Medical Missionaries in Central Africa," *The Scottish Society of the History of Medicine*, Vol. 17, 1973, pp. 188–191.

² See, for example, Ludmilla Jordanova, "The Social Construction of Medical Knowledge," *Social History of Medicine*, Vol. 8, No. 3, 1995, pp. 361–381.

³ On Laws, see John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875–1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000. On Livingstone, see, for example, Tim Jeal, *Livingstone*, London: Heinemann, 1973, Justin D. Livingstone, *Livingstone's 'Lives': A Metabiography of a Victorian Icon*, Manchester: Manchester University Press,

intersected, in various ways, in the history of the Scottish mission enterprise in Malawi that John charted, explored, and analyzed with such care.⁴

In his paper for the Scottish Society for the History of Medicine, John noted that there had been a lack of research on Scottish medical missionaries, whom he suggested were ‘perhaps the most important expatriate group in tropical Africa in the late nineteenth century.’ He presented a concise criticism of the prevailing historiography of colonial medicine in Central Africa (particularly the works of Michael Gelfand),⁵ calling for a ‘greater degree of historical astuteness.’ However, John felt that his own lack of medical knowledge hampered his ability to assess the work of mission doctors in great depth.⁶

Nevertheless, John’s research frequently touched upon medicine and health, and his approach to Malawian history in general impacted on later studies on the medical history of the region. The importance of African agency, mission education and social change, together with contested colonial power relationships were all emphasized in *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, John’s seminal monograph first

2014; on Banda, see Joey Power, *Political Culture and Nationalism in Malawi: Building Kwacha*, Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2010.

⁴ Whilst medicine, unlike politics, religion or education, was not often at the heart of John’s own research, his direct and indirect impact and influence on the historiography of medicine in Malawi was considerable. His early research, on politics, religion and society in Northern Malawi drew largely from the extensive Livingstonia mission archives. Arguably the most important agent and writer within that mission was Dr Robert Laws.

⁵ Michael Gelfand, *Livingstone the Doctor: His Life and Travels: A Study in Medical History*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1957; Michael Gelfand, *Lakeside Pioneers: Socio-Medical Study of Nyasaland (1875-1920)*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1964.

⁶ McCracken, “Scottish Medical Missionaries.” History of medicine was still largely the field of established physicians at this time. It should perhaps also be noted that both of John’s parents were general practitioners in the Scottish borders.

published in 1977. Malawian searches for new therapeutics, medicines and powers were also highlighted, for example, in the early encounters with missionaries and the anti-witchcraft or medicine drinking movements of the 1920s and 1930s.⁷ Underneath broader themes of political and religious history, questions about health, healing and medicine surfaced frequently.

Together with his colleagues from Dar-es-Salaam, Terence Ranger and John Iliffe, John pioneered a social historical approach to African history in the 1960s and 1970s. All three shared an interest in people's health, wellbeing and beliefs broadly, and whilst not medical historians as such (the history of medicine was still largely a professional discipline of physicians), they addressed themes of health and healing within their investigations into poverty, nutrition and religion. Ranger explored the connections between the spiritual and the secular in medicine and healing in the colonial period, and highlighted a range of religious and political responses to disease and suffering in Southern and East Africa. Iliffe's early interests included poverty, demography and disease mainly in Tanzania (his *A Modern History of Tanganyika* was a model for John's *History of Malawi*); later he wrote about East African medical professionals as well as a history of HIV/Aids. John's own work on Malawian history developed partly in this context of (British) African historiography that was holistic in approach and innovative in its sifting and interrogating of colonial-era sources.⁸

⁷ McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*.

⁸ See, for example, Terence Ranger, "Medical Science and the Pentecost: the Dilemma of Anglicanism in Africa," in W. Sheils (ed), *The Church and Healing*, Oxford: Blackwell 1982, pp. 333-365; Terence Ranger, "Plagues of Beasts and Men: Prophetic Responses to Epidemic in Eastern and Southern Africa," in T. Ranger & P. Slack (eds), *Epidemics and Ideas: Essays on the Historical Perception of Pestilence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1992, pp. 241-268; Terence Ranger, "Godly Medicine: the Ambiguities of Medical Mission in Southeast Tanzania, 1900-1945," in S. Feierman and J. Janzen (eds), *The Social*

Megan Vaughan, John's colleague at Chancellor College in the early 1980s, brought together Malawian history with social and intellectual history of colonial medicine in the 1980s and 1990s. While her early work focused on hunger and poverty, Vaughan also investigated the history of madness, mental illness and Zomba asylum. In her influential monograph *Curing their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness* and related articles, Vaughan brought a critically applied Foucault-informed theoretical approach to colonial medicine.⁹ Unlike, for example, Alexander Butchart, who took an entirely Foucauldian view of colonial medicine, Vaughan emphasized the differences between colonial Central African contexts and those of Foucault's European investigations. With an ironic attention to colonial follies and weaknesses (such as the absurdities of rat-tails collection, or the lack of resources for medical institutions) *Curing their Ills* reminds its readers of the thinness and the temporality of colonial medical power.¹⁰

Basis of Health and Healing in Africa, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1992, pp. 256-284; John Iliffe, *A Modern History of Tanganyika*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1979; John Iliffe, *The African Poor*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1987; John Iliffe, *East African Doctors*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1998.

⁹ Megan Vaughan, *Curing Their Ills: Colonial Power and African Illness*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1991; Megan Vaughan, "Healing and Curing: Issues in the Social History and Anthropology of Medicine in Africa," *Social History of Medicine*, Vol. 7, No. 2, 1994, pp. 283-295; Megan Vaughan, "Idioms of Madness: Zomba Lunatic Asylum, Nyasaland, in the Colonial Period," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1983, pp. 218-238.

¹⁰ Vaughan, *Curing Their Ills*; cf. Alexander Butchart, *The Anatomy of Power: European Constructions of the African Body*, London: Zed Books 1992. More traditional works in the history of medicine in Malawi should also be noted. Colin Baker wrote an early study of colonial medical service in the Protectorate era in 1976, and in the 1990s, Michael and Elspeth King published *The Story of Disease and Medicine in Malawi*, a highly valuable overview; Colin Baker, "The Government Medical Service in Malawi: an Administrative History, 1891-1971," *Medical History*, Vol. 20, No. 3, 1976, pp. 296-311; Michael King and

Limitations of colonial power, institutions and state were frequent themes that ran throughout John's work. I suspect that he might have been wary of over-reliance on Foucauldian influences in historical research, as well as the potential for theory to become overbearing. At the same time, he had an open attitude towards interdisciplinary influences. Methodologically, John's interest in micro-historical cases and emphasis on careful reading of a wide range of primary sources has much in common with the rising field of social history of medicine in Britain in the 1980s and 1990s (a field that John must have been following to an extent whilst teaching at Stirling.) Social historians brought patients back to medical history, and reconnected medicine with politics and society, and these developments were keenly noted among Africanists too.¹¹ Historians were also increasingly looking at other disciplines, notably anthropology, to better understand interactions between sufferers and healers.

By the late 1990s, a number of anthropological or ethnographic studies on medicine and healing in Malawi had appeared. These works, which had important historical dimensions, included Brian Morris' work on Chewa medical thought and practice, Boston Soko's studies on spirit possession, and ethnomusicologist Steven Friedson's monograph *Dancing Prophets: Musical Experience in Tumbuka Healing* (1996). Both Soko and Friedson worked in Northern Malawi, focused on Tumbuka-speakers, and highlighted the important connections and influences between spirit possession healing and Christianity in the region that was very much at the heart of John's early work. Friedson drew on John's research, whilst Soko's work was to later inform

Elspeth King, *The Story of Disease and Medicine in Malawi: The 150 Years Since Livingstone*, Blantyre: The Montfort Press, 1997.

¹¹ Roy Porter was undoubtedly the leading scholar in this field. His seminal article in 1985 was highly influential in shifting historians' attention to the sufferers, alongside the healers. Roy Porter, "The Patient's View: Doing Medical History from Below," *Theory and Society*, Vol. 14, 1985, pp. 225-244.

John's *A History of Malawi*.¹² In the early 2000s, the physician-scholar John Lwanda made further important contributions to the field of historiography of medicine in Malawi. Lwanda's doctoral thesis focused on HIV/Aids epidemic but put the epidemic in a longue durée history of medicine, disease and healing in the region. Lwanda's interpretation on pre- and colonial Malawian health history was notably interdisciplinary, drawing from anthropology, religious studies as well as history, and his own medical profession.¹³

Thus, by the time Agnes Rennick, anthropologist-geographer Charles Good and myself were working on the history of medicine in colonial Malawi, we were able to draw upon a wide range of historical, anthropological and ethnographical studies to support our research. Rennick brought to the fore the social history of early hospitals in Malawi by highlighting the importance of nurses and patients' relatives, and the contested relations within hospital spaces. Good's *The Steamer Parish* was a major study of missionary medicine in the Universities' Mission sphere, which innovatively connected histories of medicine and transport in Lake Malawi and drew attention to the ease with which UMCA's medical work was able to cross

¹² Brian Morris, "Chewa Conceptions of Disease: Symptoms and Etiologies," *The Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 1985, pp. 14-36; Brian Morris, "Herbalism and Divination in Southern Malawi," *Social Science and Medicine*, Vol. 23, No. 4, 1986, pp. 367-377; Brian Morris, *Chewa Medical Botany: A Study of Herbalism in Southern Malawi*, Hamburg: Lit Verlag, 1996; Boston Soko, "An Introduction to the Vimbuza Phenomenon," *Religion in Malawi*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1987, pp. 9-13; Boston Soko, "The Vimbuza Phenomenon: Dialogue with the Spirits," *Religion in Malawi*, Vol. 3, 1991, pp. 28-33; Steven Friedson, *Dancing Prophets: Musical Experience in Tumbuka Healing*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996.

¹³ John Lwanda, "Politics, Culture and Medicine in Malawi: Historical Continuities and Ruptures with Special Reference to HIV/AIDS," PhD, University of Edinburgh, 2002.

colonial borders.¹⁴ (John's continuing interest in medicine and health in Malawian history was apparent in his support and encouragement of doctoral research. He supervised Agnes Rennick's doctoral thesis and examined mine.) Whilst our works stemmed from an initial focus on missionary medicine, each extended in different ways beyond missions and sought to address issues raised by John such as the agency of Malawian medical 'middle figures,' medical education and contested colonial encounters.

In 2012, John presented a synthesis of histories of medicine, disease and health in the region as part of his *A History of Malawi*. He emphasized the very limited effects of early Western medical agencies in the country, where African mortality rates probably increased, as in Central Africa generally, from the 1890s to the 1920s (as new epidemics spread to the region), but also noted the decrease in European mortality after about 1900. With attention to the concept of *mankhwala* (medicine), John emphasized how peoples' search for health, protection and well-being informed Malawian encounters with Christianity. For the later colonial period, he briefly charted the limited expansion of government medical service and provision, and the generally unsuccessful public health measures taken to prevent or control diseases such as malaria, bilharzia and smallpox. The campaign against smallpox in 1956 by the Central African Federation authorities, in particular, met with considerable resistance and unrest.¹⁵

¹⁴ Agnes Rennick, "Church and Medicine: The Role of Medical Missionaries in Malawi 1875-1914," PhD thesis, University of Stirling, 2003; Markku Hokkanen, *Medicine and Scottish Missionaries in the Northern Malawi Region 1875-1930: Quests for Health in a Colonial Society*, Lewiston: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2007; Charles M. Good, *The Steamer Parish: The Rise and Fall of Missionary Medicine on an African Frontier*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005.

¹⁵ John McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1859-1966*, Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012, pp. 116-126, 260-264.

Intersections, impacts and influences related to medicine, healthcare and politics are likely to continue to be fruitful topics in Malawian historiography. Recently, Luke Messac (who, like John Lwanda, has medical qualifications as well as PhD) has expanded the field of history of medicine in Malawi further, and in a way returned to the ‘medicine proper’ of government hospitals and medical departments, but in the context of politics, morality and economy. Messac has innovatively analyzed the public spending on medicine and health by both colonial and post-colonial regimes, and emphasized the importance of political factors in allocating resources to healthcare. Messac’s work points to the importance of late colonial and postcolonial histories of medicine in Malawi, and to how medicine and politics remain importantly intertwined.¹⁶ Forty-five years after John’s article, we have gone some way in addressing the questions he raised, but the crucial issue of the effects of medicine on people’s health remains challenging.

Mobilities and Medical Networks in Malawi and the Empire

Politics and Christianity situates Malawian history very much as part of wider global history in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with evangelical Christian movements, industrialization and imperialism as important background forces to the shared histories of Malawians, Scots and others.¹⁷ John, like George Shepperson, Thomas Price and Jack Thompson,¹⁸ wrote about the history of Malawi in

¹⁶ Luke Messac, “Moral Hazards and Moral Economies: the Combustible Politics of Healthcare User Fees in Malawian History,” *South African Historical Journal*, Vol. 66, No. 2, 2014, pp. 371-389.

¹⁷ John McCracken, “‘Marginal Men’: the Colonial Experience in Malawi,” *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 1989, pp. 537-564; McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*.

¹⁸ George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African: John Chilembwe and the Nyasaland Rising of 1915*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University

important ways as global and interconnected history. They paid attention to contacts, exchanges and mobilities that transcended national and regional boundaries long before such approaches became fashionable. One reason for this was undoubtedly that their work on politics, Christianity and missions investigated multiple agents with diverse backgrounds, identities and connections. (In order to follow these agents, they had to consult multiple archived sources in different countries.)

In the second part of this essay, I will draw on my recent work to outline more specific intersections between medicine, politics and culture in Malawian history, with particular attention to mobilities and networks of empire, missions and labour in the colonial era.¹⁹ Of course, in his own work John had early on followed diverse actors, such as Laws, Banda or more ‘marginal men’, over borders and boundaries in Southern Africa and the British empire.²⁰ I can now see (partly only in retrospect) the ways in which John influenced and provided impetus to write a more thematic exploration of colonial encounters, medicine and knowledge rather than the more general cultural history of medicine in colonial Malawi I had initially envisaged.

Press, 1958; T. Jack Thompson, *Touching the Heart: Xhosa Missionaries to Malawi, 1876-1888*, Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2000.

¹⁹ This part of the essay is largely based on Markku Hokkanen, *Medicine, Mobility and the Empire: Nyasaland Networks, 1859-1960*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2017.

²⁰ McCracken, *Politics and Christianity; "Marginal Men"*.

I would argue that attention to mobilities²¹ and networks²² allows us to learn more about how medical knowledge was made, how expert careers were created, how medicines were acquired, given meanings and contested, and how colonialism took shape. I will explore these themes through three partly interconnected networks: an imperial network of medical authorities; a Protestant mission network, in which medicine played an important part; and a network of Malawian migrant labourers that connected Malawi with the Southern African region and beyond. In the discussion of the last two networks, the history of Hastings Kamuzu Banda stands as an exceptional case of Malawian medical mobility (with its opportunities and limitations) in the colonial period.²³

One nexus where these networks crossed could be found high upon the Khondowe plateau, where, from an elevation of 4,400 feet, the Livingstonia Institution and its main hospital overlooked the northern shores of Lake Malawi. A key institution for missions and medicine in Malawi, Livingstonia was at the centre of Scottish Presbyterian mission activities from 1894, while the David Gordon

²¹ See, for example, Nancy Rose Hunt, *A Colonial Lexicon of Birth Ritual, Medicalization, and Mobility in the Congo*, Durham: Duke University Press, 1999; Hansjörg Dilger, Abdoulaye Kane & Stacy Langwick (eds), *Medicine, Mobility and Power in Global Africa: Transnational Health and Healing*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012.

²² On networks and empires, see Frederick Cooper, *Colonialism in Question: Theory, Knowledge, History*, London: University of California Press, 2005; Deborah Neill, *Networks in Tropical Medicine: Internationalism, Colonialism, and the Rise of a Medical Speciality, 1890-1930*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2012; Brett M. Bennett and Joseph M. Hodge (eds), *Science and Empire: Knowledge and Networks of Science Across the British Empire, 1800-1970*, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2011.

²³ See Hokkanen, *Medicine, Mobility and the Empire*, Chapters Three and Five.

Memorial Hospital (established in 1911) was the leading Western medical institution of its time in Northern Malawi.²⁴

I have visited Livingstonia just once, and very briefly, in July 2004. The ascent up the steep, winding road from Chitimba left a lasting impression on me. I wondered why the mission had decided to build their main hospital, and educational centre, in such a seemingly inaccessible location. Of course, John had, in *Politics and Christianity*, discussed the reasons why Robert Laws and the Livingstonia leadership had seen fit to set up such a modern "Protestant monastery." Here, I would like to emphasize one reason in particular: the perceived healthiness of higher altitudes. At the time when Livingstonia was planned the mosquito vector for spreading malaria had not been identified, but Europeans in Malawi were convinced that high ground was the healthiest environment for them. Such an idea was not new in the British empire, and in India high altitude hill stations had long been seen as health resorts. The theory and practice of colonial hygiene (how to live healthily in warm climates) tended to be highly localized at the time. Before the emergence of imperial tropical medicine as an influential discipline in the early 1900s, rules about living and working healthily were established through processes of trial and error, in which local agents were instrumental. Local knowledge, often presented in the form of 'rules' or 'guidance' was disseminated and debated in wider imperial circles (albeit on a rather ad hoc basis), on the basis that experiences in one corner of the empire might turn out to be useful in another.

I was able to trace a network of British agents and writers who sought to define how to live healthily in the Malawi region in the late nineteenth century and who, in the process, made claims of authority and expertise in matters of health and medicine. By no means were all of them doctors: Horace Waller (a veteran of the first UMCA

²⁴ Hokkanen, *Medicine and Scottish Missionaries*; McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*; Rennick, "Church and Medicine."

mission and in many ways the architect of Livingstone's legacy) and Harry Johnston (the first Commissioner in Nyasaland) were two such lay experts. The network consisted of at least loosely connected actors including David Livingstone (often cited as an ultimate authority by Waller in particular), Robert Laws (who corresponded with Waller and was by the 1890s regarded as the most experienced doctor in the region), Harry Johnston and Waller himself. Livingstone became a figurehead of what I refer to as the 'Livingstone tradition' of medicine and hygiene in Central Africa. Key elements in this tradition were dependence on quinine as an almost catch-all medicine and carefulness in living (particularly regarding alcohol consumption), working (careful hard work was held up as the ideal) and moving (where meticulous attention to detail was advocated). The latter question of how to move healthily, or at least how to minimize risks, was an important part of this tradition: the timing of travel along with the avoidance of getting wet and of over-exertion were all vitally important. In their attempts to move about with care, Laws and others tended to rely on Malawian carriers, and in the early colonial period, health reasons were sometimes cited as partial rationalization for the use of the often-resented *machilas*.²⁵

Livingstonia can then be seen partly as an outcome of colonial theory and practice of medicine and hygiene. But it also became an important nexus in networks of Western medicine in Malawi in its own right: firstly, through its medical practice, and secondly, through its medical education and subsequent networks of its medical students and graduates. The Institution was one of the few places where Malawians had more systematic access to Western medicine, for example smallpox vaccinations and quinine prophylaxis and treatment against malaria. Whilst missionaries' medicine was often suspected, criticized and at times ridiculed, it was also considered as

²⁵ Hokkanen, *Medicine, Mobility and the Empire*, Chapter 2.

one therapeutic alternative among others in an increasingly pluralistic medical culture.

Livingstonia was not the first mission to undertake systematic Western medical education for Malawians: Dr Neil Macvicar had begun doing so at Blantyre in 1896. (However, Livingstonia doctors had certainly given on-the-job training to some medical assistants and nurses in stations such as Bandawe, Ekwendeni and Karonga in the early 1890s.) Robert Laws was influenced by Macvicar, who hoped that university-level medical education in British Central Africa would relatively soon become a reality. However, medical training in Livingstonia developed slowly: not only did construction of the hospital itself take several years, but staff shortages and some difficulties in recruiting students also contributed to delays. At least in the early years, the Institution with its ‘bracing’ climate was not inviting to Malawians, and many pupils and workers suffered from the cold conditions, which were believed to have caused various illnesses. As in the case of *machila* transport, the perceived health benefits for Europeans of the high plateau contrasted with the hardships endured by their African associates. However, with its piped water supply, the gradual completion of the hospital and the introduction of electricity (which enabled the installation of the first X-ray machine in Malawi in 1927), the Overtoun Institution could also claim to provide some genuine health benefits to its pupils, staff and patients.²⁶

Livingstonia Mission of the early 1900s was a vast enterprise that covered a region the size of England and Wales. Select pupils for higher education were sent to the Institution from across this area, meaning that Livingstonia would have been ‘home’ to students from diverse backgrounds and linguistic heritages.²⁷ Many of those who

²⁶ Hokkanen, *Medicine and Scottish Missionaries*; McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*.

²⁷ McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*.

attended the medical training course had already worked in station dispensaries and hospitals. The first to obtain their certificates, Stefano Kaunda, Daniel Gondwe and Yoram Nkata, completed their studies around 1907. In the 1910s, the colonial administration recognized the certificates given by missions to their medical graduates, which boosted their status, salaries and job opportunities in Malawi and beyond.²⁸

For a small number of Presbyterian medically-trained elite (including Kaunda and Nkata), it was possible to settle in their home regions as respected and relatively well-paid medical assistants. However, given that mission posts were few and far between, and that mission salaries were usually lower than those offered by colonial administrations or some private companies, it was perhaps unsurprising that medical assistants from Livingstonia and Blantyre began to take up positions across Southern Africa. Colonial sources suggest that they were appreciated and much in-demand in the Rhodesias and Tanganyika. For some, mobility in the colonial region connected by networks of migrant labour offered opportunities for material and social advancement, although the risks and obstacles that faced migrants could be considerable.²⁹

A number of Livingstonia medical graduates became part of wider networks of mission-educated Protestants in the rapidly expanding networks of Malawian labour migration in Southern Africa (and beyond). The ways in which migrant workers sought to keep themselves healthy, treat illnesses, and respond to various threats posed by their travel and working environments, especially the mines, would merit further in-depth study.³⁰ Existing research, colonial sources and

²⁸ Hokkanen, *Medicine, Mobility and the Empire*, Chapter 5.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ For mortality among educated Malawian migrants, see Bruce Fetter, "Colonial Microenvironments and the Mortality of Educated Young Men in Northern Malawi, 1897-1927," *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 1989, pp. 399-415.

oral histories of migrants suggest that workers would draw upon a wide range of medical resources if they were available: not only would indigenous medicine be taken at home, during travel and in working environments (often clandestinely), but Western medicine might also be taken, particularly in the mines (where its use was sometimes enforced). It is clear that migrant workers were offered a range of medicines for protection, cure, strength and luck by Malawian healers, who specifically addressed particular medical concerns (such as illnesses associated with cold temperatures and sexually transmitted diseases). Malawians were not the only consumers of Malawian medicine: medicine from Malawi became part of the expanding medical market on the Rand.³¹ Such medicines were transported south by mobile healers, by mediators and by post. It also seems that some medicines, including Western drugs, were taken from South Africa to Malawi by returning migrants. This made returning migrants a potential mediating group for drugs such as aspirin and quinine.

One elderly medical assistant, who graduated from Livingstonia in the early 1940s, recalled in an interview that he had to migrate to South Africa soon after graduation, as his mission salary proved insufficient to meet the increasing demands of his extended family. He travelled to South Africa on foot, found work in a mines hospital and specialized in physiotherapy. After spending twenty years working there, he was called back to Malawi by its new leader, Kamuzu Banda.³²

Kamuzu Banda's own history highlights that the opportunities that mobility and networks could afford to individuals were framed by power relations, social structures, economic resources and chance.

³¹ For medical pluralism in the Rand, see Anne Digby, "'Bridging Two Worlds': the Migrant Labourer and Medical Change in Southern Africa," in R. Cohen (ed), *Migration and Health in Southern Africa*, Bellville: van Straik, 2003, pp. 18-26; Anne Digby, *Diversity and Division in Medicine: Health Care in South Africa from the 1800s*, Oxford: Peter Lang, 2006.

³² Int. William Mdilira Tembo, medical assistant, Nkhorongo, Mzuzu, 9.7.2009.

As a youngster, Banda was one of the children of the nascent Presbyterian elite in the Livingstonia sphere, with access to mission school and some experience of missionary medicine. However, when his road to higher education at the Overtoun Institution was thwarted, he chose another path to higher education: first labour migration to Rhodesia and South Africa, and from there to the United States.

The latter move was possible thanks to Banda's connection with transatlantic Protestant Afro-American networks. Like Daniel Malekebu of John Chilembwe's Providence Industrial Mission before him, Banda made use of possibilities afforded by American medical schools, transatlantic Protestant networks, and philanthropic funding to get a full medical degree that was not available to Malawians within the British colonial system. But unlike Malekebu, Banda was able to reconnect with his Presbyterian background and Livingstonia network in Scotland and Malawi. This helped him to reach for British medical qualifications with the prospect of securing a post as a medical missionary or a colonial medical officer in the Nyasaland Protectorate in the 1940s. For a few years, he was a highly favoured medical recruit for both Livingstonia and the Colonial Office; he was seen as a role model and pathbreaker for a new group of East African medical graduates. Because of a complex combination of racial prejudice, colonial discrimination, misunderstandings, failures and sheer bad luck, Banda was never recruited by either mission or state. His return to Malawi was facilitated not by mission, colonial or medical professional networks, but by a new network of nationalist Malawian, and generally African, political agents. However, Banda's life and early career illuminate how networks of colonial medical experts, Protestant missions, and migrant labour, which all criss-

crossed in the nexus of Livingstonia, could have important effects also in the lives of people who were not at the heart of them.³³

These are, of course, only some of the many networks, nexuses and agents that have left notable historical records and traces. To follow such traces, to make previously unseen or forgotten connections and contexts visible can be challenging, but very rewarding as well. This kind of research can benefit hugely from generous advice and support from fellow historians, and none could be more generous than John. He shared rare or newly-found sources, such as John Chilembwe's letter from 1911 (in which Chilembwe wrote about his trying out both African and Western treatments for his asthma) and recently surfaced letters of Kamuzu Banda, written in Edinburgh in 1938.³⁴ John's last email to me was about sharing his forthcoming article on Banda in Britain. He always showed how open, encouraging and generous scholarship could, and should, be. Although medicine was not John's personal focus, he laid a solid foundation for scholars interested in medicine, healing and health.

However, I can also readily imagine John pointing out that following such ever-expanding networks and mobile agents can also distract historians from the crucially important regional and local histories, and from the majority of people who lived their lives in comparably small village communities. I suspect that it is these fields of local and regional history that will see some of the most important new work on Malawian medical history.

³³ Hokkanen, *Medicine, Mobility and the Empire*, Chapter 5; John McCracken, "Hastings Kamuzu Banda: the Edinburgh Years," *The Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 70, No. 1, 2017, pp. 1-18.

³⁴ Sean Morrow and John McCracken, "Two Previously Unknown Letters from Hastings Kamuzu Banda, written from Edinburgh, 1938, Archived at the University of Cape Town," *History in Africa*, Vol. 39, 2012, pp. 337-354.

The Development of Malawian Church Historiography

Klaus Fiedler

In 1977, Cambridge University Press published John McCracken's *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875 – 1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*. The author would not have seen himself as a church historian, but he wrote substantially about mission and church history, and if his work is not the cornerstone of Malawian Church History, it moved it to a new level, and this twice: in 1977 as the foundational study of Malawian Church History done from abroad, and when it was reprinted in 2000, as the book that set the standards for the writing of Church History within Malawi. One of these standards was that more attention should be paid to both the history of the missionary women and of the local Christian women.

Above all, I would display much greater sensitivity than is contained in *Politics and Christianity* to the position of women within the church. Much more work requires to be done on Scottish women teachers, whose role I underestimated, on missionary wives, about whom fascinating fresh new evidence has emerged and, above all, on Christian women, a silent majority in much of this book.¹

¹ He pointed to the letters and diaries of Mamie Martin, which since have been published (see below). See also: Isobel O. Reid, "Myth and Reality of the Missionary Family: A Study of the Letters of Rev. J.R. (Jack) Martin and his Wife, Mary Evelyn (Marcie) written from Livingstonia Mission, Malawi, 1921-1928, with particular emphasis on the position of missionary wives," MTH University of Edinburgh, 1999. (John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875 – 1940. The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, ²2000, p. 14.)

In this chapter I will assess, sometimes with a personal touch, the book's position in the overall historiography of Christianity in Malawi, which began soon after the first missionaries came to Malawi.

Recording and Publishing the Events

While the UMCA missionary work at Magomero from 1861 may be seen as the beginning of Malawian church history, I prefer to start it with David Livingstone's first visit to Malawi in 1859. Though he was no longer an employee of the London Missionary Society, he understood himself as a missionary, trying to find the routes to and the places for settled missionary work. He left a detailed record of his exploratory journey, to be published soon after his return.²

In order to write history, the records need to be first created and then preserved. The early missionaries, because of the slowly developing postal systems, were strong in writing diaries, journals, letters and reports, and much of that "paper trail" has been preserved in the countries of the North. Special places here are Edinburgh, Stellenbosch and Rome. Some of such records have found their way into various denominational archives, a few have been published,³ but many of the records are lost.⁴ What possibilities such correspondence presents when published has been shown in the publication of Mamie Martin's letters and diary extracts.⁵

² David and Charles Livingstone, *Narrative of an Expedition to the Zambezi and its Tributaries and of the Discoveries of Lakes Shirwa and Nyasa, 1858-1864*, London: John Murray, 1865 (New York: Johnson Reprint, 1971).

³ Examples are: Ian Linden, *Mponda Mission Diary 1889-1891*, Lilongwe: White Fathers, 1989; James McCarthy, *The Road to Tanganyika. The Diaries of Donald Munro and William McEwan*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006.

⁴ An example is the letters of Clement Scott. 19 letters to friends are in the Church of Scotland archives, but his relatives threw away most of his letters.

⁵ Mamie Martin died in New Bandawe in 1928, giving birth to her second child. After her death, her husband became a pastor in Scotland, never remarried. After his death in old age, his nieces and nephews found four big

Among the early missionaries some were black, the six Lovedale missionaries and the first SDA missionaries, the Branch family, and mission employees like Tom Boquito and Joseph Bismarck. I have not found out how much of their correspondence has been kept.

The idea of the missionary society as a voluntary association contained a strong element of information, given in the mission journals.⁶ Here Southern Malawi is a special case, as very early in the history of Blantyre Mission, it had its own monthly journal, published not in Scotland, but in Blantyre,⁷ and printed on its own printing press.⁸ Its approach to the writing of Malawian church history was that it recorded the events. It was also a tool to get involved in the local politics, being quite critical of the early colonial administration, of Cecil Rhodes and of settler attitudes, and playing a major role in the campaign to save Southern Malawi from Portuguese rule.

The purpose of writing an autobiography is not strictly historical, but such works can contain much valuable historical information and, as they are not objective, they give valuable personal insights. The most prominent of such autobiographies may well be Robert Laws, *Reminiscences of Livingstonia*,⁹ and for a later generation *Going with God*.¹⁰ An indirect autobiography is Agnes Fraser's biography of her

folders in the attic with all the correspondence, as if "waiting for publication". See Margaret Sinclair, *Salt and Light. The Letters of Mamie and Jack Martin from Malawi (1921 – 1928)*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2003.

⁶ Andrew F. Walls, "Missionary Societies and the Fortunate Subversion of the Church," *Evangelical Quarterly*, Vol. 88, No. 2, 1988, pp. 141-155.

⁷ The claim that *Daily News*, originating in the local settlers' monthly journal, is Malawi's oldest newspaper, is an error, as *Life and Work* was earlier.

⁸ The printer was Mungo Chisuse, who had been trained in Scotland.

⁹ Robert Laws, *Reminiscences of Livingstonia*, Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1934.

¹⁰ Ronald Caseby (ed), Alexander Caseby. *Going with God. The Biography of Reverend Alexander Caseby from 1898 until 1991*, Book Guild, 1993 [also electronic].

husband.¹¹ For the work of the UMCA W.P. Johnson's could be the best autobiography.¹² For the Afrikaans speaking missionaries, the most autobiographical book may be Labuschagne's work,¹³ whose area included Cape Maclear, the oldest Christian congregation in Malawi.¹⁴

I have not been able to find any autobiographical publications from the Catholic side, nor have I found any missionary woman's autobiography. The closest here could be Emily Langworthy, *Into Africa with Father* (1939), in which she describes the few but crucial years with her father Joseph Booth in Malawi.¹⁵

Autobiographies written by Africans emerged quite early. The first seems to have been Furahaani.¹⁶ There were autobiographies both in Chichewa and (more) in English.¹⁷ One autobiography, that of Daniel

¹¹ Agnes R. Fraser, *Donald Fraser of Livingstonia*, London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1934.

¹² William Percival Johnson, *My African Reminiscences, 1876 – 1895*, London: UMCA, 1926 (reprinted New York: Negro Universities Press, 1969). See also: Arthur F. Sim, *The Life and Letters of Arthur Fraser Sim*, London: UMCA, 1901.

¹³ A. S. Labuschagne, *The Missionary*, Fichardtpark: Druforma Press, 2000.

¹⁴ Innocent Ng'onamo, "A History of Malembo CCAP Presbytery from its Beginnings at Cape Maclear (1875 – 2016)," MA, Mzuzu University, 2017. His research emphasized the local perspective, pointing out that Cape Maclear CCAP is the oldest congregation of both Livingstonia Synod and Nkhoma Synod.

¹⁵ This manuscript was later published as: Emily Langworthy, *This Africa was Mine*, Stirling: Sterling Tract Enterprises, 1952. Elsabe de Villiers, *Agter de Grasdeur*, Cape Town: South African Bible Society, nd., may also qualify as an autobiographical account, but I have not been able to see it.

¹⁶ M. Furahaani, *Autobiography of an African Slave Boy*, London, 1892.

¹⁷ See e.g. Harry Kambwiri Matecheta, *Blantyre Mission. Nkhani za Ciyambi Cace*, Blantyre: Hetherwick Press, 1951; Petro Kilekwa, *Slave Boy to Priest. The Autobiography of Padre Petro Kilekwa*, London: UMCA, 1937; K.M. Malinki, *The History of Pastor K.M. Malinki*, nd [1923]; Joseph Bismarck, "A Brief History of Joseph Bismarck," Occasional Papers of the Department of Antiquities, Zomba 1968, pp. 49-54.

Malekebu, is still unpublished.¹⁸ I am not aware of autobiographies in the time between the World Wars.¹⁹ An autobiography that covers more than the first half of the twentieth century and that has much information on both the Church history and the political history of Malawi is: Lewis Mataka Bandawe, *Memoirs of a Malawian*.²⁰ More recent notable autobiographies include those of Legson Kayira,²¹ Edward Mwasi,²² and Handwell Hara.²³ More such publications should be encouraged.

Another source for the writing of church history, are missionaries' books about their work. I find a good number of books from the Presbyterian and Reformed side. They are not direct history, but they often contain historical information, both on the pre-missionary history and on church history in the making. Here I find as representative Mackenzie's *Spirit Ridden Ngondé*²⁴ or Elmslie's *Among the Wild Ngoni*.²⁵ The Reformed side is probably best represented by A.L. Hofmeyr

¹⁸ Daniel Malekebu, *The History of my Life and my Work*, 1940. It will be included in the upcoming Series "Biographies of People and Parishes" of Luviri Press.

¹⁹ Except D. Fraser, *The Autobiography of an African: Daniel Mtusu*, London: Seeley Service, 1924, which is doubtful as an autobiography.

²⁰ Blantyre: CLAIM, 1971, 143 pp.

²¹ Legson Kayira, *I Will Try*, Johannesburg: Rivonia, 2013.

²² Edward Dunstan Mwasi, *Service above Self. The Story of Edward Dunstan Mwasi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2009.

²³ Handwell Hara, *From Herd Boy to University Lecturer. An Autobiography*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2019.

²⁴ D.R. Mackenzie, *The Spirit Ridden Konde*, London: Seeley Service, 1925.

²⁵ W.A. Elmslie, *Among the Wild Ngoni*, Edinburgh: Oliphant and Ferrier, 1899, London: Frank Cass, 1970.

²⁶ and for the Anglican side I could mention McCulloch.²⁷ I found no comparable book on the Catholic or Evangelical side. Some of these books have been reprinted²⁸ and many others should be reprinted.

On the African side I found little to compare, the closest may be Augustine Ambali, *Thirty Years in Nyasaland*.²⁹ On this level again I found no female authors, describing their work over the years.

I need to make special mention here of the Anglican contribution through the 3-volume history of the UMCA,³⁰ which is the only contribution at the level of an official history of a mission (and thereby church). This tradition was later continued and adopted by Bishop Tengeru.³¹

Overall, I found that those missionaries that worked for what is now CCAP made the largest contribution to the writing of Malawian church history, produced in many forms. On the Anglican side the main contribution is the official history, and there is very little in conscious history writing on the Evangelical side. All over the women's contribution is very limited, though they did much of the actual missionary work. The African contribution was strong at the level of early autobiographies, and up to 1950 there was no strictly academic writing of history yet.

²⁶ A.L. Hofmeyr, *Het Land langs het Meer*, Stellenbosch: CSV(SA), 1910.

²⁷ M. McCulloch, *A Time to Remember: The Story of the Diocese of Nyasaland*, London: 1959, 123 pp.

²⁸ Many by Negro Universities Press, New York in the 1960s and 1970s.

²⁹ London: UMCA, 1931.

³⁰ A.E.M. Anderson-Morsehead, *The History of The Universities Mission to Central Africa*, Vol. I, 1859 - 1909, London: UMCA, 1953; A.G. Blood, *The History of the Universities Mission to Central Africa*, 1907-1932, Vol. II, London: UMCA, 1957; A.G. Blood, *The History of the Universities Mission to Central Africa*, 1933-1957, Vol. III, London: UMCA, 1962.

³¹ James Tengeru, *The UMCA in Malawi. A History of the Anglican Church*, Zomba: Kachere, 2010.

Early Academic Studies of Malawian Church History

For most of Africa, the 1960s marked not only the transition from colonies to nation states, but also the emergence of a new approach to the study of African history, in which major emphasis was given to the African side of history and lesser emphasis to the role of the immigrant communities. For African Church History this meant that it was to be written not as missionary history, but as history of the African church, in which the missionaries, of course, had their share, but in which African initiative, right there from the very beginnings, was to be duly recorded and understood.

I learnt this new approach to the writing of African Church History first from Louise Pirouet, my lecturer at Makerere (1965/66 and 1968/69). The title of her PhD was "Black Evangelists: Spread of Christianity in Uganda, 1891-1914."³² In her lectures she showed us the considerable African initiative not only in the acceptance of the Christian faith in Buganda but also in its early spread to the western kingdoms of Uganda.

When I registered for a postgraduate degree with Makerere University, she became my supervisor. As the distance from South Tanzania to Kampala was too great, I was transferred to Dar-es-Salaam University, where Professor Isaria Kimambo became my supervisor, and thereby I came into the famous Dar-es-Salaam School of History,³³ in which John McCracken played an important part. Professor Kimambo did not indoctrinate me on the rules of the "Dar-es-Salaam School of History," but I am convinced that he

³² She was one of the first Europeans to receive a PhD from an East African University. See M. Louise Pirouet, "The Expansion of the Church of Uganda (N.A.C.) between 1891 and 1914, with special reference to the work of African teachers and evangelists" PhD, University of East Africa [Makerere College], 1968.

³³ For this approach to reassess African history see chapter 1 in John Iliffe, *Tanganyika under German Rule 1905-1912*, Nairobi: EAPH, 1969, pp. 1-8.

agreed with the local perspectives I employed. And this brought me, though I did not yet know, into line with the writing of history in Malawi.³⁴

The new phase in the writing of Church History in Malawi was not only academic, but embodied fully the new approach to the writing of African history that gave full recognition to African initiative and participation. Here the pioneer had been George Shepperson, who since 1949 had been a lecturer at Edinburgh University for "Imperial and American History," cooperating with Tom Price.³⁵ They did not just give Africans a voice, but made one of them, the Rev John Chilembwe, the centre of their seminal book.³⁶

Of course, George Shepperson, like John McCracken, was not a church historian in the narrow sense of the term, but his political history was church history in the way that he wrote about the missions and churches in Malawi, which were much involved in the politics of those days. He was well aware (as were others who were his students or followed his approach), that there was a relationship between the missionary enterprise and its colonial contemporary, but he was not willing to let one be subsumed by the other,³⁷ and so, by

³⁴ When I joined Dar-es-Salaam University, Prof Ranger and John McCracken had already left, but Prof Ranger influenced me much in my research approach at that time.

³⁵ From 1963 till his retirement in 1986 he was the "William Robertson Professor of Commonwealth and American History" at Edinburgh University.

³⁶ Published as: George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African. John Chilembwe and the Origins, Setting and Significance of the Nyasaland Native Rising of 1915*, Edinburgh University Press, 1958; there were five reprints, the last (1987) being a paperback version. This version was reprinted by Kachere in 2000 as the 6th reprint. A 7th reprint has been agreed for Luviri Press in 2019.

³⁷ This idea was promoted by Walter Rodney, also at some time lecturer in the Department of History in Dar es Salaam, for whom Livingstone, Stanley and Karl Peters (missionary, explorer, conqueror/settler) were all the same: Walter

writing political history, they wrote church history, and that with a new emphasis on the African share in it.

George Shepperson started the new approach in Malawian church historiography, and he influenced Andrew Ross and John McCracken. Andrew Ross wrote as a church historian, but he did not miss the political dimension, as he convincingly showed that Malawi, as a state in its current borders, was in many important aspects a creation of Blantyre Mission,³⁸ and because of this his thesis was (later) published under the title: "Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi."³⁹

John McCracken wrote his history of Livingstonia Mission as a political historian,⁴⁰ writing in the heydays of liberation from colonialism, but he wrote equally the history of a mission (Livingstonia Mission) that developed into Livingstonia Synod, and he did justice equally to the spiritual calling of the missionaries. He brought to the attention of the academic world the fact that the Ngoni Kingdom of Mbelwa joined the British Empire on its own and peacefully so.⁴¹ He also pointed out the role the Livingstonia graduates played in the nationalist movement (and the full support they had from Dr Laws and other missionaries).⁴²

Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa*, London/Dar es Salam, 1972, pp. 154-5.

³⁸ Andrew C. Ross, "The Origins and Development of the Church of Scotland Mission, Blantyre, Nyasaland, 1875-1926," PhD, University of Edinburgh, 1968.

³⁹ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996; reprinted as Luviri Reprint No. 1 (Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2018).

⁴⁰ "Livingstonia Mission and Evolution of Malawi, 1875-1939." PhD, University of Cambridge, 1967.

⁴¹ The Governor came to accept the incorporation, without his usual armed guard.

⁴² His thoroughly revised PhD thesis was published under the title: *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940. The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the*

George Shepperson inaugurated the phase of research into the church history of Malawi on the PhD level, done for outside universities. This phase is characterized by research into the history of the mainline denominations.⁴³ Andrew Ross and John McCracken studied the two Presbyterian Missions that formed the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) in 1924, and Martin Pauw studied, for Stellenbosch University, the History of Nkhoma Mission that joined the CCAP in 1926.⁴⁴

From the same period a book and a dissertation should be mentioned. Ian and Jane Linden wrote the history of the White Fathers' work in the Central Region,⁴⁵ and R.G. Stuart did the same for the work of the Anglican UMCA.⁴⁶ Linden had a clear political agenda to follow, researching into "Chewa Resistance." while Stuart dialogued, like John McCracken did, with Horton's theory of the enlargement of scale necessitating the change to a monotheistic religion. Both acknowledge some truth in Horton's argument, but

Northern Province, Cambridge University Press, 1977. Reprinted, with a thoughtful introduction, by the Kachere Series (Zomba) in 2000 and 2008.

⁴³ The exception to this is, of course, Shepperson and Price's research on John Chilembwe.

⁴⁴ C. Martin Pauw, "Mission and Church in Malawi: the History of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, 1889-1962." The thesis was printed in a simple format in Lusaka (1980), and now there is a new and revised version: *Mission and Church in Malawi. The History of the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian 1889-1962*, Wellington: CLF, 2016.

⁴⁵ Ian Linden was teaching biology at Chancellor College, and inspired by the White Fathers and by Matthew Schoffeleers, the Montfort anthropologist, he changed to the study of African history and with his wife wrote the book. He went on to write a PhD supervised by Professor Richard Gray, the Church historian, on the role of the Catholic Church in Rwanda with a focus on the Hutu-Tutsi ethnic conflict (*Church and Revolution in Rwanda*, Manchester University Press, 1972).

⁴⁶ R.G. Stuart, "Christianity and the Chewa: the Anglican Case, 1885-1950," PhD, University of London, 1974.

John McCracken felt that Horton's theories are insufficient to explain the phenomenon of Africans becoming Christians:

In *Politics and Christianity* I probably err in the weight I give to Robin Horton's well-known thesis that the idea of a personal, active God became more attractive for many people as social relations expanded. I do not regret, however, the central thrust of my argument which is that political and economic considerations did often play a major role in determining the initial response of Africans to the missionary presence but that these were insufficient in themselves to explain the emergence of indigenous Christian churches.⁴⁷

These researchers were all academics from abroad, mostly working with their respective universities. Their research covered the history of these missions and the churches that sprang from them up to 1940,⁴⁸ with the exception of the work of the Montfortians in Southern Malawi.⁴⁹ Over the years other researchers from the UK, like Peter Forster, Jack Thompson and Kenneth Ross, kept up their interest in Malawi.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi*, p. 13.

⁴⁸ To the period also belongs the doctoral thesis of Roland Vezeau, "The Apostolic Vicariate of Nyasa. Origins and First Developments 1889 – 1935," Rome, 1989, concentrating on facts without much specific church historiography.

⁴⁹ The work of the Montfortian Missionaries was finally covered by a collaborative publication: Hubert Reijnaerts, Ann Nielsen and Matthew Schoffeleers, *Montfortians in Malawi: Their Spirituality and Pastoral Approach*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1997. It is no scholarly investigation, but is the first history that pays proper attention to the female missionaries and their work, a demand that John McCracken made in his review of his original book.

⁵⁰ A major biography is Peter G. Forster, *T. Cullen Young: Missionary and Anthropologist*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2004. Also see Peter G. Forster, "Missionaries and Anthropology: the Case of the Scots of Northern Malawi," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 1986, pp. 101-120. Jack Thompson published his Edinburgh University PhD thesis as *Christianity in Northern Malawi: Donald Fraser's Missionary Methods and Ngoni Culture*, Leiden: Brill, 1995 and went on to write his groundbreaking study of the Lovedale

What Shepperson did for Chilembwe, Harry Langworthy did for Joseph Booth. The resultant work did not reach the scholarly community then, because censorship made a publication in Malawi impossible and the American publisher wanted the author to cut down the book by more than half.⁵¹ While the classical missions and the Chilembwe/Booth complex were fairly well covered, at least up to 1940, no research had been done on the Evangelical missions and churches.

After these seminal researches and the resulting books, the logical consequence would have been that Malawians write their own church history. Not much of this happened at that time. Kings Phiri at Chancellor College taught generations of students there in history, and a major result was the History Seminar Papers Series from 1969 - 1984,⁵² with 245 papers by staff and students, and a good number of them dealt with mission history.⁵³

missionaries (T. Jack Thompson, *Touching the Heart: Xhosa Missionaries to Malawi, 1876-1888*, Pretoria: UNISA, 2007). Kenneth Ross contributed several articles in Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *Gospel Ferment in Malawi: Theological Essays*, Gweru: Mambo-Kachere, 1995 (Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2018), and an insightful overview: *Malawi and Scotland Together in the Talking Place Since 1859*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013.

⁵¹ Early in my time in Zomba I learned about the existence of such a work, wrote to the author, and published it with Kachere: Harry Langworthy, *Africa for the African. The Life of Joseph Booth*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2002 (524 pp). This excellent biography is scanty on Booth's time in Auckland and Melbourne. To make up for this deficit I wrote: Klaus Fiedler, *The Making of a Maverick Missionary: Joseph Booth in Australasia*, Zomba: Kachere, 2008.

⁵² They are kept at Chancellor College Library, and WorldCat shows that some have found their way to the Library of Congress and several other international libraries. A full list of all papers presented is: Jack Deverson Jeremani, *History Seminar Papers. An Author and Title Index 1968 – 1983*. A copy is available at Chancellor College and at Mzuzu University, and an electronic copy can be obtained from Mzuni Press (mzunipress1@gmail.com).

⁵³ Typical such titles are: G.M. Mughogho, "The Development of Education in the Nthalire (Chitipa District) from the Late 19th Century to 1945" (1969/70

The first Malawian to write a PhD on a Church History topic was J.C. Chakanza, who studied the African Independent Churches in Malawi, but he did this as a social anthropologist.⁵⁴ Chakanza's thesis was never published,⁵⁵ and though he produced some documentary material, he had few students who shared in the study of African Independent Churches. He saw, as he had learned in Oxford, the African Independent Churches less as Christian churches, but more as "New Religious Movements,"⁵⁶ thus there was no need and reason to investigate them with the tools of writing Church History.⁵⁷

After him Isabel Phiri did her research for Cape Town University, again not as a church historian, but she wrote on the history of the development of the women's organization in Nkhoma Synod (Chigwirizano), thus opening a neglected field: the study of women's church history.⁵⁸ A thesis directly devoted to historiography was

Series) or E.T. Mwenifumbo, "The UMCA Education for Girls in Malawi (1971/72)," 42 papers look directly to be dealing with church history.

⁵⁴ J.C. Chakanza, "Continuity and Change: A Study of New Religious Movements in Malawi, 1900-1981," DPhil, Corpus Christi College, Oxford University, 1985.

⁵⁵ In 1998 he published, based on the text of his PhD: *Voices of Preachers in Protest. The Ministry of Two Malawian Prophets: Elliot Kamwana and Wilfred Gudu*, Zomba: Kachere, 1998, pp. 107.

⁵⁶ Such "New Religious Movements" could be Christian or not, ranging from the Cargo Cult in the Pacific via the Zionist Churches in South Africa to the African Church of Christ in Malawi, whose teaching and practice differed from its "Western" parent church only in small details.

⁵⁷ I disagree with Chakanza's classification of the Providence Industrial Mission as an African Independent Church, as it is in reality a Mission Church from America (and so do the church leaders see it), with the missionaries being black.

⁵⁸ Isabel Apawo Phiri, "African Women in Religion and Culture – Chewa Women in the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian: A Critical Study from Women's Perspective," PhD, Cape Town University, 1992; published as Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*,

written by Helleman Kamnkhwani,⁵⁹ but I have not been able to discern any influence it had.⁶⁰

For the Seventh-day Adventist Church, Jaspine Bilima produced two dissertations. His MDiv gave an overview of SDA history in Malawi,⁶¹ his DMin presented the life of an early Malawian Adventist leader (and missionary to Zambia and Congo), but he did not develop this important aspect of Malawian church history any further, and remaining unpublished, exerted no measurable influence on Malawian church historiography.⁶² What these researches have in common is that little was published and that the authors took up other fields and did not develop into church historians.

Establishing the Structures

Church History can, of course, be written in any context, but the most conducive one is the University, or any other tertiary institution. Over the years theological colleges were established, and all taught Church History in one way or another, but there was no research connection and the academic level was seen as low. In 1976 Religious Studies was introduced as a subject for students of Education at the University of Malawi, from which over the years a full Department

Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000, ²2008.

⁵⁹ Helleman Adson Kamnkhwani, "An Evaluation of the Historiography of Nkhoma Synod, Church of Central Africa Presbyterian," PhD, University of Stellenbosch, 1990.

⁶⁰ Earlier he had written a considerable church history of Mvera, the oldest congregation of Nkhoma Synod ("A Brief History of Mvera Congregation," BTh, University of the North, 1981.)

⁶¹ Jaspine Bilima, "History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Malawi 1900-1980," MDiv, Andrews University, 1987. Recently published (*The Story of the SDA Church in Malawi, 1900 – 1980*, Berrien Springs: Single Page, 2016) it still suffers from shortness and a long introduction and background.

⁶² Jaspine Bilima, "James Malinki of Malawi: Church Leader in Cross-culture Ministry," DMin, Andrews University, 1993.

of Theology and Religious Studies developed. Besides general ("Western") church history, African Church History was included as a separate subject. In order to achieve degree level recognition, Kenneth Ross, as the Secretary to the Diploma Board, worked to establish the Board of Theological Studies⁶³ that would relate various theological colleges through the Department of Theology and Religious Studies at Chancellor College to the University. In the curriculum Church History and African Church History had a proper place, and the dissertations written in these institutions at the Diploma and Bachelor's level contained some useful research on local Church History. Beyond this, the University provided the institutional framework for recognized degrees, from Diploma to PhD.⁶⁴

When these things happened, the University of Malawi was the only university in Malawi, and at Chancellor College there was the only Department of Theology and Religious Studies. Since those days the institutional set-up to "house" church history has dramatically changed. There are now about ten universities that teach theology and therefore have a possibility to contribute to church history research. Five of them have started their own postgraduate programmes that can cater for Church History at Masters level, while Mzuzu University and University of Malawi also offer the PhD.

Postgraduate Programmes at Chancellor College

When I came to Zomba in 1992, seconded by the German Association of Protestant Missions and Churches, I did not bring any specific programme, but I was a church and mission historian, I had supervised my first PhD for the Evangelical Theological Faculty in Leuven, I was the editor of the first Evangelical missiological journal in

⁶³ Initially comprising only Zomba Theological College, St Peter's Seminary and Kachebere Seminary, it expanded its membership during the 1990s and developed a Bachelor's Degree programme.

⁶⁴ Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *Church, University and Theological Education in Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1995.

German and the editor of some low cost missiological books. In Zomba I found a ready welcome from my colleagues, and the structures within which to work. I never became a specialized church historian, but in all the work I did I tried to give church history a good share, be it in teaching, supervision, research or publishing.

So as a Department we started to develop both the postgraduate programme (MA and PhD) and the publishing programme (Kachere Series). Neither was restricted to church history, but often church history was either the subject or a major component. I had brought with me from Makerere and Dar-es-Salaam the emphasis on the African initiative, from Germany the conviction that the Evangelicals have a major part in the missionary endeavour and deserve (in their variety) much academic study, and from the experiences of my life and my theology that the role of women in the church and its history must be given due recognition.

Over the first 15 years both the postgraduate studies and publications made their contribution on all three levels: Early in my time I managed to rescue the excellent Joseph Booth biography from oblivion just before the author died, and we supervised PhDs and MAs on various Evangelical churches: Free Methodists, Baptists,⁶⁵ Seventh-day Adventists, and the [Pentecostal] Apostolic Faith Mission. That was not sufficient to deal with the many Evangelical denominations, but a step into a new area, barely touched before in Malawi.

⁶⁵ Here the variety shows clearly: Hany Longwe wrote first a study of the Achewa Providence Industrial Mission (largely based on oral sources), showing that this is not an "African Independent Church" but simply a Baptist church, just one without missionaries. Then he wrote the history of the Baptist Convention of Malawi, showing its multi-genesis (missionary and migrants). Patrick Makondesa wrote the history of the [Baptist] Providence Industrial Mission, portraying John Chilembwe as the missionary he was. (In the study of Baptist history, there are at least 29 denominations still to go.)

In all postgraduate work the African contribution became prominent (though the missionaries' contribution was not downplayed), and to receive a postgraduate degree from an African university was already in itself a process of "Africanization." The first major contribution (after Isabel Phiri) to "women only" church history was made by Rachel Banda, who showed the (slow) development of the women's contribution in the Southern parts of the Baptist Convention of Malawi.⁶⁶ An interesting aspect of the postgraduate programme was its strong international "clientele": Two PhDs were on church history in Tanzania and Zambia, and an MA and a PhD were awarded to a German working in Malawi. The Department of Theology and Religious Studies of the University of Malawi has revived the PhD programme and its MA programme still makes contributions to the study of church history.⁶⁷

An important decision of the Department was to connect research and publication. In most cases Kachere was the publisher (later also Mzuni Press), and one PhD was published by Brill, a high-level international publisher, and in excellent hardbound quality, which makes the book virtually inaccessible in both Malawi and Tanzania.⁶⁸ In all church history research we emphasized the work with primary sources, and we were reluctant to be directed or maybe dominated by a specific theory of (church) history writing. We tried to avoid all

⁶⁶ Rachel Banda, *Women of Bible and Culture: Baptist Convention Women in Southern Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2005, based on "Liberation through Baptist Polity and Doctrine. A Reflection on the Lives of Women in the History of Women in the Baptist Convention in Southern Malawi," MA, University of Malawi, 2001.

⁶⁷ Jane Kambilinya Chalimba, "The Maidservants of the Most High: The Place of Women in the Church of Central African Presbyterian (CCAP) of the Blantyre Synod," MA, University of Malawi, 2010.

⁶⁸ Stefan Hörschele, *Christian Remnant – African Folk Church: Seventh-day Adventism in Tanzania, 1903-1980*, Leiden: Brill, 2007, based on Stefan Hörschele, "Christian Remnant - African Folk Church: The History of Seventh-Day Adventism in Tanzania, 1903-1980," PhD, University of Malawi, 2005.

generalizations, be it about "the missionaries," "the African Independent Churches" or "the Pentecostals."

Church History Writing at Mzuzu University

In 2008 my wife, Rachel NyaGondwe Fiedler (a church historian), was appointed as a lecturer at Mzuzu University. I followed her and continued my involvement as the (adjunct) postgraduate coordinator of the new postgraduate programmes in Theology. Six months later I was appointed Professor there, which gave me many opportunities and the structures to pursue (also) research and writing in church history. Of the 9 PhDs only one was straightforward church history,⁶⁹ but as it deals with the Churches of Christ, it opened up a new Evangelical denomination for academic history research. In Mzuzu we continued with Seventh-day Adventist research, and two PhDs contain much material on the history of the SDA Church,⁷⁰ thus strengthening the process that began at Chancellor College.

Between 2008 and 2018 two members of staff wrote their PhDs in Church History. Rachel NyaGondwe Fiedler wrote the first history of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians,⁷¹ and Rhodian Munyenembe wrote the history of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian.⁷² Both were supervised by Professor Hoffie

⁶⁹ Mark Thiesen, "Churches of Christ: The First Seventy-Five Years in Malawi (1906-1981)," PhD, Mzuzu University, 2018.

⁷⁰ Macleard Banda, "The Remnant and its Mission: An Investigation into the Interaction of the Seventh-day Adventist Church with Society in Malawi," PhD, Mzuzu University, 2014; and Frank Chirwa, "A Critical Examination of the Changing Role of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Malawi: A Historical, Theological and Socio-Cultural Analysis," PhD, Mzuzu University, 2014.

⁷¹ Rachel NyaGondwe Fiedler, *A History of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2017.

⁷² "A History of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) as a Federative Denomination (1924-2014)," PhD, University of the Free State, 2016"; published as: *Pursuing an Elusive Unity: A History of the Church of*

Hofmeyr of the University of the Free State, the current Vice Chancellor of Nkhoma University.

Of the 20 MA theses so far, six are directly in church history, and two deal with the role of women with much historical material in them.⁷³ Frank Kadogana showed a new trend to do research not from the centre of the mission or church, but to concentrate on a smaller area.⁷⁴ This follows two dissertations from the University of Malawi,⁷⁵ and there should be more such studies on the "secondary" missions and church districts, so as to reduce the attention given to the top people in the top places.

A new development is the Department's interest in religious geography. So far, a study on Mzuzu City has been completed by

Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) as a Federative Denomination (1924-2018), Carlisle: Langham, 2019.

⁷³ Oswald Jimmy Banda, "The Role of Women in the Anglican Diocese of Northern Malawi," MA, Mzuzu University, 2013; Willard Kamandani, "Life and Work of Anglican Women in Malawi," MA, Mzuzu University, 2016. Related research: A.K. Nyirenda, "Women Voice in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, A Critical Evaluation especially with Nkhoma Synod," MA, Diakonhemmet University College, 2013, P.F. Chifungo, "Women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod: A Practical Theological Study of their Leadership Roles," PhD, University of Stellenbosch, 2014 and Richard Gadama, "Women in the Charismatic Churches in Malawi: A Historical and Theological Perspective," PhD, University of the Free State, 2015.

⁷⁴ Frank Kadogana, "The Origin and Growth of Karonga CCAP Mission in Karonga and Chitipa from 1900 – 2013," MA, Mzuzu University, 2015.

⁷⁵ Yonah Matemba, "The History of Matandani Mission of Seventh-day Adventists, Neno, Malawi, 1908-1989," MA, University of Malawi, 2000 (Yonah Matemba, *Matandani, The Second Adventist Mission in Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 2000) and Macleard Banda, "Mission by All to All: A Study of the History of the Seventh-day Adventist Church Lunjika Mission 1932 –1995," MA, University of Malawi, 2006 (Macleard Banda, *Lunjika SDA Mission in Northern Malawi, 1932 – 1985*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2018).

Zeenah Sibande.⁷⁶ Its emphasis is of course religious geography, but for each of the 203 places of worship he found there is a little history. The same student is now writing his PhD on a geographical history of Livingstonia Synod, following up on Andrew Ross' findings that Blantyre Mission was crucial in forming the state of Malawi.

Women's Church History writing has gained a major place at Mzuzu University, with Rachel Fiedler as a lecturer in Church History and African Feminist Theology, and other lecturers making much effort to include women's aspects and history into their work.⁷⁷ What is still missing is a full "Women's Church History of Malawi." which would be a truly pioneering work.

Mzuzu University has successfully enlarged the research into the Evangelical side of Christianity, but there is still the challenge of the required research into the Charismatic Movement. The recent publication based on an MA from Chancellor College, provides a good background to the origins of the Charismatic Movement,⁷⁸ and some historical research has been done,⁷⁹ but much more research is

⁷⁶ Zeenah Sibande, "The Religious Geography of Mzuzu City in Northern Malawi," MA, Mzuzu University, 2016 (Zeenah Sibande, *The Religious Geography of Mzuzu City in Northern Malawi*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2018).

⁷⁷ Here two MA dissertations may serve as examples: Isaac Chibowa, "Reconciliation in Light of Pauline Theology: The Case of the Border Wrangle between the Synod of Livingstonia and Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian," MA, Mzuzu University, 2017 and, for neighbouring Zambia, Lazarus Chilenje, "An Examination of the Influence of Paul's Gender Theology according to his Letter to the Galatians on the Role of Women in the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian Zambia (CCAPZ)," (MA), Mzuzu University 2017. For PhD see Frank Chirwa, "A Critical Examination of the Changing Role of Women in the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Malawi: A Historical, Theological and Socio-Cultural Analysis," PhD, Mzuzu University, 2014.

⁷⁸ Bright Kawamba, *The Blantyre Spiritual Awakening and its Music*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2018 (based on his 2013 MA at Chancellor College).

⁷⁹ Khetwayo Banda, "Word Alive Ministries International (WAMI) and its Wholistic Mission," MA, Mzuzu University, 2012 is the only history of a

needed to do justice to the new revival movement that is fast changing the face of Christianity in Africa.

State of Church History Writing in Malawi

Four decades have passed since John McCracken published his seminal book. How much progress has there been and what is the state of Church History writing now? Much progress has been made: The local structures for writing church history have been established, there has been a growing interest to write Malawian Church History, among both Malawians and local foreigners, the range of denominations covered has broadened considerably, and the female side has been given much more attention in the writing of Church History than ever before.

In all theological institutions church history is being taught, but there is not yet a full textbook for Church History of Malawi.⁸⁰ In several theological institutions the writing of Diploma or BA/BDiv dissertations is required, some of them are written in church history and contain original research, but only a few, as Kachere or Mzuni Documents, are available for further research.⁸¹ It would be desirable

denomination. In addition: Felix Nyika, "Apostolic Office in Malawian Neocharismatic Churches: A Contextual, Biblical-Theological, and Historical Appraisal," PhD, Mzuzu University, 2015.

⁸⁰ Though limited by its scope, the following has served as a textbook: John C. Weller and Jane Linden, *Mainstream Christianity to 1980 in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe*, Gweru: Mambo, 1984 (with chapters contributed by Roger Peadar and Jack Thompson). A chapter on Malawi is provided in the textbook: Steven Paas, *The Faith Moves South. A History of the Church in Africa*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, pp. 187-210. Written as political history, the chapter "The Missionaries" in D.D. Phiri, *History of Malawi from the Earliest Times to the Year 1915*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 2004, can also help. Since 1996 there has been a *Reader* for Malawian Church History: Kenneth R. Ross ed., *Christianity in Malawi: A Sourcebook*, Gweru: Mambo-Kachere, 1996.

⁸¹ 77 BA dissertations in church history or relevant to it are preserved in the electronic Kachere/Mzuni Documents collection, and are available for

to collect and make available all undergraduate dissertations on church history so as to integrate them into the mainstream of research.⁸²

The two institutions with most research at the MA level are the University of Malawi (Chancellor College) and Mzuzu University. The Catholic University of Malawi, University of Livingstonia, Nkhoma University and University of Blantyre Synod have started MA programmes that may produce some church history research.⁸³ At the PhD level, the only programme currently producing church history research is at Mzuzu University.⁸⁴ Of the Malawian lecturers who teach Church History at the various institutions only three have managed to publish church history beyond their original dissertations.⁸⁵ This means that we cannot speak of any emerging "school of church history" in Malawi. Church history writing in Malawi does not follow a specific theory or theological framework. We see it as appropriate to get close to the primary sources, develop from them the

research, 51 from the University of Malawi, 21 from Mzuzu University and 5 from University of Livingstonia, one of which has been developed into a book (Kelly Bwalya, *The Life of Dr Wyson Moses Kauzobafa Jele. Missionary to Zambia*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2017). Many of the dissertations I count here are not directly written as church history, but contain useful material. There are also some unpublished MA and PhD modules on church history, like Moses Mlenga, "Fifty Years of Post-Missionary Leadership in Livingstonia Synod, 1958 to 2008," PhD Module, Mzuzu University, 2008.

⁸² A good number of them are listed among the 237 titles in worldcat.org/search?q=su%3AMalawi+Church+history.&fq=&dblist=638.

⁸³ For the University of Livingstonia there is currently only one MA student studying a historical subject, as most MA students are interested in "Theology and Development."

⁸⁴ At Chancellor College of the University of Malawi the PhD programme in Theology has resumed, with currently two registered students (September 2019).

⁸⁵ Rhodian Munyenembe, Rachel NyaGondwe Fiedler (Mzuzu University) and Hany Longwe (University of Livingstonia).

findings and through their analysis make a contribution to the theory of writing church history.⁸⁶

Since John McCracken's time, the writing of Church History has broadened considerably, to include the Evangelical and Pentecostal side and the African Independent Churches (which found a new evaluation), and a beginning has been made to write the history of the Charismatic churches. In all areas still much more needs to be done as there are so many different denominations, and even the history of the mainline churches after 1960 needs much more attention.⁸⁷

Some "female church history" has been written by male researchers, and in all historical work done at Mzuzu University, students are required to give special attention to the female side. There is some progress, but much more needs to be done to produce a "two-winged" church history of Malawi.⁸⁸ Overall, the number of female lecturers and female students of Church History is still limited.

For the further development of the writing of church history, a closer connection between research and publication is required, as a lonely PhD on the shelf of some more or less famous university rarely moves the writing of church history forward.⁸⁹ Though the publishers

⁸⁶ I have examined several theses written for South African universities which suffer from what I call a strong "ideological overload."

⁸⁷ Contributions are here: Larry Brown, "The Development in Self-Understanding of the CCAP Nkhoma Synod during the First Forty Years of Autonomy: An Ecclesiological Study," PhD, University of Stellenbosch, 2004; Rhodian Munyenembe, *Pursuing an Elusive Unity*.

⁸⁸ For the concept of a "two-winged" theology see: Rachel NyaGondwe Fiedler, *A History of the Circle*, p. 46.

⁸⁹ There was a microfilm copy of Andrew C. Ross' PhD ("The Origins and the Development of the Church of Scotland Blantyre Mission," University of Edinburgh, 1968), available in the Chancellor College Library, but I have not heard of anyone using that, except his student Kenneth R. Ross, who arranged

are there and a manageable financial pattern has been established, too many dissertations and other research results remain unpublished. Overall the representation of Malawian church history in academic journals is weak. There are two Malawian journals in Religious Studies, *Religion in Malawi* and *Religion and Culture*, which include some articles on Malawian church history, but as yet there exists no scholarly journal dedicated to Malawi church history. A few articles on Malawian church history have been published abroad. Here the problem is that they are barely accessible to the ordinary Malawian student of Church History due to price and availability.⁹⁰

Adrian Hastings described McCracken's book as "a model, not easily surpassed, of mission history which is also genuinely social history drawing together a network of very varied themes." Has the subsequent work surpassed it? Or fallen short? I think it has not been surpassed, and I also think that John McCracken, who kept up his interest in the history of the church in Malawi all his life long, when looking at what has been achieved during his lifetime, would smile and urge us on to do more.

the publication as a book. It was not the thesis that moved the writing of Malawian church history forward, but the book.

⁹⁰ Here a remedy could be to publish collected essays, either by author or by subject.

State Power and African Agency: Peasants' Food Production in Early Colonial Malawi, 1891-1920

Bryson Nkhoma

Introduction

One of the themes that dominated John McCracken's scholarship is that of state power and African agency in the agricultural economy of the territory. Drawing on evidence from his extensive study of the interactions between the state, peasants¹ and settler farmers in plantations of tea and tobacco, McCracken noted that since the country became a British Protectorate in 1891, the colonial state implemented policies that undermined peasant agriculture.² Obsessed with a desire to establish an export-oriented economy with settler farmers as the main drivers, the state embarked on appropriating the labour and land resources of the peasants through land alienation, taxation and regulation of African agricultural markets. However, while these developments disrupted African economies, McCracken argued that their impacts on peasants varied with place, time, gender and class. The peasants too were not passive victims of state power. As those from other parts of Africa, peasants from

¹ I use the term peasants to describe African rural producers who used their own land largely to produce crops to meet subsistence needs. Food security is used to describe the state of having sufficient food for an active and healthy life.

² For details of McCracken's work, see "Peasants, Planters and the Colonial State: The Case of Malawi, 1905-1940," *Journal of East African Research and Development*, Vol. 12, 1982, pp. 21-35; "Experts and Expertise in Colonial Malawi," *African Affairs*, Vol. 81, No. 322, 1982, pp. 101-116; "Peasants, Planters and the Colonial State: The Impact of the Native Tobacco Board in the Central Province of Malawi," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 9, No. 2, 1983, pp. 172-192; "Share Cropping in Malawi: The Visiting Tenant System in Central Province, 1920-1968," in *Malawi: An Alternative Pattern of Development*, Edinburgh: Centre for African Studies, 1985, pp. 44-51.

Malawi overtly and covertly survived, negotiated and resisted excesses of colonial political and economic power that undermined their economies.³ However, the extent to which this state power and peasant agency played out in the country's food economy requires a systematic and nuanced analysis.

This chapter examines the extent to which peasants maintained food production in a complex and changing policy context of early colonial Malawi. Beginning from 1891 and ending in 1920, when the state passed the Native Food Stuffs (Amendment) Ordinance which prohibited settlers from exploiting peasants' foodstuffs in the country, the chapter provides an overview of the agricultural and food policy as well as growing concerns on these policies among different actors. Using colonial archival records and oral histories, the study concurs with McCracken that, despite the devastations caused by colonial capitalism, peasants from Malawi did not degenerate into a class of food insecure people in their interaction with the colonial state. While Megan Vaughan attributed peasants' ability to maintain food security to their power to control family labour, this chapter draws attention to the competing interests of the colonialists, settlers and the peasants.⁴ Taking advantage of the conflicting interests among these food buyers, peasants expanded production of food crops and survived the policies that they considered as retrogressive. They rationally and creatively exploited the 'tension of empire' to

³ For details, see J. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985; A. Isaacman, "Peasants and Rural Social Protest in Africa," in F. Cooper, F. Mallon, A. Isaacman, S. Stern, and W. Roseberry (eds), *Confronting Historical Paradigms: Peasants, Labour and the Capitalist World System in Africa and Latin America*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1993, pp. 1-120.

⁴ For details of Megan Vaughan's argument, see M. Vaughan, "Food Production and Family Labour in Southern Malawi: The Shire Highlands and Upper Lower Shire Valley in the Early Colonial Period," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 1982, pp. 351-364.

maintain food production during the period under study.⁵ In doing this, the study contributes to the earlier Malawi food historiography which extensively demonstrated the extent to which colonial agricultural, marketing and transport policies constrained African food production and thereby, made peasants vulnerable to hunger and famine, the worst being the 1948/9 famine.⁶ Other than degenerating into a food insecure class, it is argued here that the Malawian peasants successfully managed to maintain food security in the quagmire of colonial disruptions.

The chapter develops this argument under three substantive sections. In the first section, it explores various ways by which the colonial state exercised its political power and dominance to undermine peasants' food production between 1891 and 1907. The second section demonstrates how the establishment of the Agricultural Department initiated interaction between the state and the peasants to improve the latter's food production. The last section explores the extent to which state production, marketing and consumption policies limited peasant food production between 1911 and 1920. The chapter pays particular attention to the responses of the peasants to what they perceived as a deliberate move by the state to exploit their food surplus.

⁵ For theoretical details about the 'tension of empire,' see for example, F. Cooper, "Conflict and Connection: Rethinking Colonial African History," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 99, No. 5, 1994, pp. 1516-1545; F. Cooper and A. Stoler (eds), *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997.

⁶ For details, see M. Vaughan, *The Story of an African Famine: Gender and Famine in the Twentieth Century Malawi*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1987; E. Mandala, *End of Chidyerano: A History of Food and Everyday Life in the Lower Tchiri Valley in Malawi, 1860-2004*, Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005; E. Mandala, "Feeding and Fleecing the Native: How Nyasaland Transport System Distorted a New Food Market, 1890s-1920s," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2006, pp. 505-524.

Colonial Incursion and Peasant Food Production, 1891 - 1907

Britain's declaration of Malawi as its Protectorate in 1891 was quite significant in the history of peasants' food production in the country. In large measure, the colonization brought the state and the peasants into an interaction that had serious implications on the country's food production. As early as 1891, the colonial state facilitated the alienation of the peasants from arable land that was critical for the production of food crops.⁷ Sir Harry Johnston, the first Consul General, working through the Native Land Settlement Policy, started the process of granting Certificates of Claim to white settlers who had alienated peasants from their land in the country prior to 1891.⁸ In fact, by the time colonialism was established, white missionaries, settler farmers, hunters and traders, had dubiously acquired large tracts of land from the chiefs in the country.⁹ Considering the significance of the alienated land to their production, however, some chiefs from Southern Malawi where the largest chunk of land was alienated, with the support of Scottish missionaries in Blantyre, lodged a complaint to Harry Johnston about the legality of these earlier land

⁷ For details of land alienation history in Malawi, see B.S. Krishnamurthy, "Economic Policy, Land and Labour in Nyasaland, 1890-1914," in B. Pachai (ed), *Early History of Malawi*, London: Longman, 1972, pp. 384-404; B. Pachai, "Land Policies in Malawi: An Examination of the Colonial Legacy," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1973, pp. 681-698; B. Pachai, *Land Politics in Malawi, 1875-1975*, Kingston: Limestone Press, 1978; R. M. Mkandawire, "The Land Question and Agrarian Change in Malawi," in G.C.Z. Mhone (ed), *Malawi at the Crossroads: The Post-Colonial Political Economy*, Harare: Sapes Books, 1992, pp. 171-187; C. Baker, *Seeds of Trouble: Government Policy and Land Rights in Nyasaland, 1946-1964*, London: British Academy Press, 1993.

⁸ MNA S1/492/32 Sir Harry Johnston's Policy on Native Land Settlement in Nyasaland.

⁹ See W.O. Mulwafu, "Soil Erosion and State Interventions in Estate Production in the Shire Highlands Economy of Colonial Malawi, 1891-1964," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2002, pp. 25-43.

transactions.¹⁰ According to the chiefs, the land was imprudently given to the settlers with little or no payment, as they were only interested in settlers' protection against the prevailing threats of the slave trade.¹¹ Rather than returning the land, Johnston only included a "Non-Disturbance Clause" in the land settlement policy that provided for the allowance of existing villages in the estates that were granted Certificates of Claim. The clause read:

No native village or plantation existing at the date of the certificate on the said estate shall be disturbed or removed without the consent in writing of Her Majesty's Commissioner and Consul-General, but when such consents shall have been given the sites of such villages or plantations shall revert to the proprietor of the said estate. No native can make other and new villages nor plantations on the said estate without prior consent of the proprietor.¹²

By 1894, the state regularized the alienated 3.7 million acres of land out of the existing 25.1 million acres of land through the Land Settlement Policy in the country. The state also established forest reserves in areas such as Chikala Hills, Zomba and Mulanje mountains in order to contain tsetse flies and conserve game. While the state contended that most of the alienated land was unoccupied and ecologically inhabitable, it is argued here that the alienation undermined peasant food production.¹³ The policy robbed the peasants of fertile arable land on which to cultivate food crops. While the forest reserves helped to contain the spread of tsetse flies, they also resulted in the prohibition of hunting which was an old food security adaptive strategy for the peasants in the face of droughts and floods. By

¹⁰ For the details about the complaints see A.C. Ross, "The Blantyre Mission and Problems of Land and Labour," in R.J. Macdonald (ed), *From Nyasaland to Malawi: Studies in Colonial History*, Nairobi: The East African Publishing House, 1975, pp. 86-107.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ For details about Murray's argument see, S.S. Murray, *A Handbook of Nyasaland*, Zomba: Government Printer, 1922.

occupying this land, the state denied the peasants access to firewood, wild game and fruits.¹⁴

Although a Non-Disturbance Clause provided for peasants who settled in the estates prior to the policy to remain, it too made no provision for extra land in the event of population growth. And indeed, as the population began to increase with the settlement of the Lomwe immigrants, peasants from the country began to feel the impact of land inadequacy. Beginning from the late 1890s, Lomwe immigrants from Mozambique settled in the Shire Highlands to exploit the emerging employment opportunities after the country became a British Protectorate.¹⁵ Wiseman Chirwa recorded of the settlement of over 30,000 Lomwe immigrants in Blantyre, Chiradzulu and Mulanje in the areas dominated by estates belonging to the British Central Africa (BCA) company, British and East African (B&EA) Company, and A. L. Bruce Trust.¹⁶ Since they came late, the Lomwe settled mostly in the private estates where, apart from straining African space under the non-disturbance clause, estate owners called upon them to provide labour services in lieu of the land they occupied and cultivated subsistence crops.¹⁷

Most importantly, the settler farmers, whom the state wanted to please through the land policy, protested sharply the inclusion of the 'Non-Disturbance Clause' in the Certificates of Claim to their land holdings. Rather than protecting existing villages, the settlers wanted the state to either remove the peasants totally from the estates or maintain them on condition that they provided labour service in lieu

¹⁴ Int. James Kabunga, Ramusi Village, Zomba, 29.10. 2003.

¹⁵ Nyasaland Protectorate, *A Handbook of Nyasaland*, p. 89.

¹⁶ W.C. Chirwa, "Alhomwe and Mozambican Immigrant Labor in Colonial Malawi, 1890s–1945," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 27, No. 3, 1994, p. 535.

¹⁷ Ibid.

of the land they occupied on the estates.¹⁸ Despite the non-disturbance provision, the settler farmers soon started to exploit the peasants on their estates by demanding labour as payment for the land portions they occupied.¹⁹ They took advantage of the fact that the state in the territory lacked sufficient funds and staff to monitor effectively settlers' compliance with the non-disturbance clause.

However, the missionaries, whose work allowed them to interact more closely with Africans, reported of the existence of exploitation of Africans living on the estates to the administrators.²⁰ After confirming the matter, the state passed the Land Ordinance (Native Location) in 1904. The ordinance reaffirmed the right of African residency on estates. It legally compelled the estate owners to avail part of their land, which was idle to Africans for occupation and cultivation.²¹ The state was, however, afraid of antagonizing relations with the white farmers such that it remained hesitant, until the 1930s, to implement the ordinance fully.²²

Yet despite the land alienation, the state continued to depend on the peasants for the production of foodstuffs to feed the growing number of employers and their employees in the country. By 1900, the African Lakes Company (ALC) employed 65,000 Africans, while the estates had 72,000, the Shire Highlands Railway (SHR) Company had 3,900, and the Oceania had 3,000.²³ As in most parts of Africa, employers adopted the feeding of workers as a strategy to control and domesticate labour as well as improve efficiency and maximize

¹⁸ MNA S1/492/32 Sir Harry Johnston's Policy on Native Land Settlement in Nyasaland.

¹⁹ FO 84/2197 Johnston to Colonial Office 10 March 1892.

²⁰ FO 2/748 Land Commission to Pearce, 6 May 1903.

²¹ Ibid.

²² See Baker, *Seeds of Trouble*, p. 57.

²³ *Central African Times*, 12 January 1901.

productivity.²⁴ The 1895 Nyasaland Employment of Native Labour Regulations (NENLR) required that employers should provide workers with proper housing, adequate and nutritious food, health, sanitation and medical care.²⁵ Subsequently, the establishment of plantations, transport companies and other commercial companies increased demand for peasants' foodstuffs in the country. While the SHR and Oceania companies, for example, needed over "0.9 tons of salt per week, 7 tons of beans per week and 48 tons of flour per day" to feed its combined 6,900 workforce, the Public Works Department required over 750 tons of maize to feed their 3,000 workers.²⁶ The employers found feeding of these workers an effective way of boosting productivity. They argued that, "the whole secret of successful work on the plantation is food."²⁷ For them, African workers would easily be enticed into work through the provision of food at the work place. "In fact, you can literally do anything with a man who is satisfied with food such as he gets from home," they contended. "He should be better fed when he is at work than when he is leading an idle, village life."²⁸

The settlers could produce foodstuffs to feed their workers or indeed engage into commercial food production, but they considered such an adventure as less cost effective. The price of food crops was low, and given the high freight costs, settlers were reluctant to expand into commercial food production.²⁹ Moreover, they did not want to be distracted from cash cropping which was relatively more profitable than food crop production.³⁰ Subsequently, although the state

²⁴ For details about feeding workers as a control mechanism in the region, see for example C. van Onselen, *Chibaro: African Mine Labour in Southern Rhodesia, 1900-1923*, London: Pluto Press, 1976.

²⁵ Nyasaland Protectorate, "The Employment of Native Labour Regulations of 1895."

²⁶ Mandala, "Feeding and Fleecing the Native," p. 512.

²⁷ *Central African Times*, 23 May 1901.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Nyasaland Times*, 25 July 1912.

³⁰ Mandala, "Feeding and Fleecing," p. 513.

denied peasants the requisite training and support for agricultural production for the most part of the early colonial period, the responsibility of producing food fell on the peasants.³¹ While the growing market for foodstuffs gave peasants an opportunity to raise money, the state pegged the price of food crops at a low level.³² Between 1893 and 1901, for instance, the price of maize was 15/- to 20/- per ton. In doing this, the state wanted to appease the settler farmers who were reluctant to spend a lot of money to feed the employees they engaged in their estates.³³

Similarly, although the peasants were such a crucial asset in the supply of foodstuffs, the state was, until 1908, still less interested in enhancing peasants' productive capacity. Being largely underfunded and understaffed, the state refrained from embarking on any projects that would transform the productive capacities of peasants in the country.³⁴ As in most of its colonies, Britain minimized colonial funding to ensure "that colonies should not become long-term financial burdens to the metropolis."³⁵ Until 1911, the territory survived largely on local revenues with a supplementary funding of £10,000 from the British South African Company (BSAC) to meet the administrative costs of police and military operations in the region.³⁶ Britain also provided an Imperial Grant-in-Aid for the construction of a railway line from Blantyre to Chiromo to Tete.³⁷ Consequently, the colonial state was perpetually in deficit to effectively finance its operations and development projects such as agriculture.³⁸ Furthermore, Grants-in-Aid were subject to strict scrutiny and auditing, and thus,

³¹ Ibid.

³² *Nyasaland Times*, 25 July 1912.

³³ *Central African Times*, 23 May 1901.

³⁴ McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p. 81.

³⁵ Ibid, p. 76.

³⁶ *Nyasaland Protectorate, A Handbook of Nyasaland*, 183-184.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

the state could hardly divert its use to other pressing needs.³⁹ Subsequently, the state had to rely on local revenues from taxes, customs and licences, and the revenues were, throughout the colonial period, not adequate to sustain its operations.⁴⁰

Moreover, although many members of the state believed that the future of the country lay in the hands of Africans, Sir Harry Johnston considered the peasants as reckless producers whose methods of cultivation were unsustainable, ecologically destructive and not sufficiently expansive due to the low levels of technology use.⁴¹ Transforming such peasants into effective producers, would require a lot of capital, which was not available at this point in time. Thus, Johnston determined to only confine peasants' participation in the colonial economy to that of suppliers of cheap labour to the settler farmers as well as supply of foodstuffs, though with no support from the state.⁴²

Only in cotton production did the state extend support to the peasants, at least from 1906, when cotton was declared an African crop after it was rejected by the settler farmers due to the crop's intensive labour requirement and low prices.⁴³ The peasants who adopted the crop were given cotton seeds through British Cotton Growers Association (BCGA), which promoted the crop. The state also dispatched instructors, known as travelling agents, to teach peasants the cultural practices associated with cotton production.⁴⁴ With the prevailing low prices coupled with the required labour intensity, participation in cotton production only succeeded in undermining peasants' time for food production. In as far as low pricing was concerned, for instance, the state sold the cotton in Britain at £38

³⁹ McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p. 76.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ H. H. Johnston, *The British Central Africa*, London: 1897, p. 37.

⁴² Johnston, *British Central Africa*, p. 160.

⁴³ MNA, A/5/1/1 Nyasaland Protectorate General Report, 1899-1909.

⁴⁴ For details, see C. Masangano and C. Mthinda, "Pluralistic Extension System in Malawi," IFPRI Discussion Paper 01171, April, 2012.

that it bought at as low as £8 per ton.⁴⁵ With time, peasants resolved to intercrop cotton with maize to cope with the labour costs of cotton production. According to James Matuta, "intercropping cotton with food crops would help the peasants to maximize production and safeguard against food insecurity while practicing cash cropping."⁴⁶ Yet the state ruthlessly discouraged peasants from doing so. It uprooted most of the cotton that the peasants intercropped with food crops.⁴⁷

Agricultural Department and Peasants Food Production, 1908 – 1910

The establishment of the Agriculture Department in 1908 provided an opportunity for the state to make transformative interventions into peasant food production. Under the headship of a Director of Agriculture, the state wanted to use the Department to advance and coordinate issues related to agricultural production and development in the country. The department would act as a vehicle for executing and monitoring state agricultural interventions.⁴⁸ Apart from working with agricultural and veterinary related staff, the Department would also engage District Resident Officers, also known as District Commissioners, to supervise agricultural developments in their jurisdictions on its behalf.⁴⁹

However, as instrumental as the Department was, it was until 1910 less enthusiastic in facilitating the production and marketing of peasants' foodstuffs. Apart from inadequate staff and finances to do this, the state was still obsessed with cash crop farming and thus was

⁴⁵ P. Terry, "The Rise of the African Cotton Industry in Nyasaland, 1902 to 1918," *The Nyasaland Journal*, Vol. 15, No. 1, 1962, p. 59.

⁴⁶ Int. Jemus Matuta, Kusokwe Village, Zomba, 13.12.2016. He also grows cotton in the area. He said that this is an old practice in the basin. His parents used to do the same.

⁴⁷ MNA, A/5/1/1 Nyasaland Protectorate General Report, 1899-1909.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Nyasaland Protectorate, General Report, 1899-1909.

reluctant to provide agricultural advice to peasants who were predominantly engaged in food cropping.⁵⁰ The state viewed food production as less lucrative to warrant huge state investments due to low prices and high freight costs.⁵¹ Furthermore, the settlers had pressed the state to establish the Department in order to provide them with quality extension services to enhance their crop and livestock production, and as such, they exclusively considered themselves as the only bona fide beneficiaries of the Departments' activities.⁵² Consequently, the Department only provided nominal agricultural extension to the peasants who adopted cotton, which had been declared by the state as an African crop in 1906.⁵³

The increased demand for foodstuffs, however, pressed the Department to encourage the expansion of peasants' food production, through propaganda and distribution of new varieties of crops only. Beginning from 1909, for instance, the Department engaged Resident Officers to make periodic visits to assess peasants' performance and estimate crop yields.⁵⁴ During these visits, the Resident Officers organized meetings with local leaders and the peasants to encourage them to produce more food crops. Besides, the Department gave peasants new crop varieties, produced from its experimental gardens established between 1891 and 1912 at Mulunguzi, Bwaila, Naisi, Khanda and Namiwawa, all based in Zomba district.⁵⁵ The crops largely included maize, groundnuts and rice. However, most of the peasants discounted the new crops on the ground that they altered local tastes and demanded special skills, which the Department was unable to provide.⁵⁶ This continued up to 1910

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ *Nyasaland Times*, 25 July 1912.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ MNA A/5/1/1 Nyasaland Protectorate General Report, 1899-1909.

⁵⁴ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of the Agriculture and Forestry Year Ending 31 March 1908.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Interview, Mwasiyamphanji, Ramusi Village, Zomba, 18.11.2016.

when the state began to take a sustained interest in the production and marketing of peasants' foodstuffs.

Food Production and Marketing Regulatory Policies, 1911-1920

From 1910, the Agriculture Department started to directly deal with the production and distribution of peasants' foodstuffs in colonial Malawi. Both ecological and economic factors accounted for this development. Ecologically, the country experienced recurrences of droughts that affected the peasants' food production. Some of these droughts took place in 1897, 1900, 1903 and 1910, while the floods occurred in 1898, 1901 and 1906.⁵⁷ In particular, the 1910/11 drought affected the capacity of the peasants to produce sufficient foodstuffs for their subsistence as well as for sale to white employers in the country.⁵⁸ The Department erroneously associated the famine with what it perceived as imprudent African practices such as shifting cultivation, deforestation, overstocking, tribal wars and excessive beer drinking.⁵⁹ For the state, the absence of what they perceived as modern agricultural technology in the context of growing demands for foodstuffs disabled the peasants from producing surplus foodstuffs to cushion them from such prolonged droughts and famine. Since then, the state decided to intervene decisively in the food production and distribution practices relating to peasants in Malawi.

Economically, the state also wanted to meet the increasing demand for maize export in Europe, which began in 1900, but reached its climax between 1910 and 1914. The state started to export maize in 1910.⁶⁰ However, the Agriculture Department, through which the state procured export maize, faced difficulties to

⁵⁷ Nyasaland Protectorate, *A Handbook of Nyasaland*, p. 155.

⁵⁸ Nyasaland Protectorate, Native Foodstuffs Ordinance, 1912.

⁵⁹ MNA S1/170/11 Intoxicating Liquor Ordinance.

⁶⁰ Nyasaland protectorate, Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture for the Year Ending 31 March 1910.

procure adequate quantities of maize from the peasants. In addition to competition for maize with Indian traders and European settlers who unscrupulously bought maize from peasants, the state also attributed the failure to procure maize to the low-technology of peasant agriculture.⁶¹ When maize exports increased from 2,000 to 2,013 tonnes valued at £6,002 in 1911, the Director encouraged the Governor to invest further in maize production contending that the amount of the exported maize was a small fraction of the quantity of maize it could have exported if it had improved maize production and enacted vibrant maize market legislation.⁶² Since the prices of maize in the country were relatively lower than in other countries, the Director further argued that the country would be making huge profits from the export of maize.⁶³

However, due to inadequate financial and human resources, the Department limited its interventions to the regulation of the production, consumption and marketing of peasant foodstuffs rather than improving their capacity to produce more food crops. The state formulated the Intoxicating Liquor Ordinance and the Native Foodstuffs Ordinance in 1911 and 1912, respectively for the purpose.⁶⁴ Apart from regulating what the state regarded as food wastages, the state used the former to force peasants to spend the most of their time working in the gardens rather than just drinking beer. In prohibiting beer brewing and drinking, the state was also responding to complaints by settler farmers who accused peasants of poor agricultural performance due to beer drinking.⁶⁵ But the most crucial was the Native Foodstuffs Ordinance of 1912 through which the state not only prohibited the sale of peasants' foodstuffs during the seasons of food scarcity, but also regulated the production and

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Agricultural Department Year Ended 31 March 1911.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Nyasaland Protectorate, Intoxicating Liquor Ordinance of 1911.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

marketing of these foodstuffs.⁶⁶ With the help of a Food Production and Control Committee, the state used this ordinance to fix quotas of the foodstuffs the peasants were to produce in the country. Before making any foodstuff purchases, the ordinance required settler farmers and other employers to obtain permission from the Food Committee, which set annual limits for them to purchase from the peasants.

The settler farmers and the peasants, however, contested the ordinances that apparently discouraged the production of food surplus that was essential for subsistence, socio-cultural and economic needs of the country.⁶⁷ The settlers particularly faulted the Food Production and Control Committee for frequently setting low maize quotas to satisfy their employees. As in South Africa, Zambia and Tanzania, the peasants considered beer drinking not only as a favourite pastime but also a means to social cohesion as well as accessing food-for-work communal labour.⁶⁸ Therefore, they could not subscribe to the liquor ordinance.

The outbreak of World War 1 in 1914, which increased demand for peasant foodstuffs needed to feed the soldiers, also accentuated prevailing tensions between the state, settlers and peasants.⁶⁹ As per policy, the state, through the Agricultural Department, reduced the quotas allocated to the settlers, and encouraged peasants to increase acreage for maize production in order to make maize available to the

⁶⁶ Nyasaland Protectorate, Native Foodstuffs (Ordinance) of 1912.

⁶⁷ Nyasaland Times, 2 July 1918.

⁶⁸ See for example J. Crush and C. Ambler (eds), *Liquour and Labour in Southern Africa*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002; J. Willis, *Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa, 1550 – 1999*, Boydell and Brewer, 2002; H. Moore and M. Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition and Agricultural Changes in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890-1990*, Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1994.

⁶⁹ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of the Agriculture and Forestry Department Year Ending 31 March 1915.

military operations.⁷⁰ This brought the Department into direct confrontation with the settlers who needed more foodstuffs to feed their employees. The Department also faced difficulties with encouraging the peasants to increase the acreage of foodstuff production at a time when maize prices were reduced and beer brewing prohibited.

To avoid conflicts, the Agriculture Department revisited its agriculture policy. Firstly, the Department raised the prices of maize from £2 per ton to £6 per ton.⁷¹ Secondly, it encouraged settlers to take advantage of the high prices to produce maize for the military. The Department asked settlers to devote 25% of their land holding to the production of maize for the military and their workers.⁷² Thirdly, it pledged to construct and improve markets and road networks to facilitate the production and marketing of foodstuffs.⁷³ Owing to the increase in maize prices and improved road networks and markets, settler farmers began to grow maize.

Table 1: Foodstuff Purchases (in tons) by the State in colonial Malawi, 1914-1918⁷⁴

Year	Maize	Potatoes	Groundnuts	Rice
1912	2 100	370	211	72
1913	2 890	450	250	85
1914	4 216	875	2 120	123
1915	11 372	1 163	3 643	263
1916	76 862	1 690	13 075	434
1917	973	3 470	4 747	43
1918	843	3 218	4 231	40

⁷⁰ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture and Forestry of the Year Ending 31 March 1916.

⁷¹ *Nyasaland Times*, 20 March 1915.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ For details on road networks and markets, see Murray, *A Handbook of Nyasaland*, pp. 98-100.

⁷⁴ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Reports Agriculture Dep., 1914-1918

For all its flaws, it is clear from the above table that since the outbreak of World War I, there was an increase in the amount of foodstuffs that the state purchased for the local and export markets. Largely this was a consequence of the pricing and marketing reforms that the state made to boost supply of foodstuffs to the military. However, there was a sudden drop of food purchases from 1917, and this was partly due to state decision to slow down supply of foodstuffs to the military as the war seemed to be heading towards the end.

Worse still, after the war and until 1920, the state abandoned the policy completely, and reduced the maize prices to £2 per ton as had been the case before the outbreak of the war.⁷⁵ In response, the settlers stopped participating in commercial maize production. The peasants also failed to understand the reduction of maize prices at a time when the prices of other commodities were going up due to post- War inflation.⁷⁶ As a result, the settlers and the peasants united in protesting the reduction of the prices of maize. Through their newspaper, *Nyasaland Times*, the settlers contended that: "We are afraid that the native who is supposed by some to be stimulated by high prices will prefer high prices rather than maize at low prices offered by the government."⁷⁷

Like the settler farmers, the peasants too strongly resisted the reduction of food prices after the war. For instance, Chief Kawinga and his people refused to sell the maize they promised to the Resident Officer of Zomba at the start of the growing season in October 1917.⁷⁸ The Resident Officer reported:

⁷⁵ *Nyasaland Times*, 18 April 1918.

⁷⁶ MNA S1/21/19 Monthly Reports Zomba District, 1918-1919. This was presented in a memorandum dated July 1918.

⁷⁷ *Nyasaland Times*, 2 July 1918. Also quoted by Mandala, "Feeding and Fleecing," p. 514.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*

When I spoke to the headman about the maize on my last trip to Chikala, they all made all sorts of excuses, such as that the crop was not good as they had thought when it was in the garden, and that they had not enough people to bring it into the Boma. But I think that they consider that the price was too low, and that they had plenty of money to turn any surplus into beer rather than sell at the price the government offers. Several headmen asked why, when the prices of all cloths have more than doubled, they should sell foodstuffs at prices ruling before the war.⁷⁹

While the peasants and settlers were engaged in the above-noted contestations, another drought occurred in the country during 1918/19. Since the production of foodstuffs was controlled and maize prices were low, the state did not have sufficient maize stocks to cushion the peasants from the famine.⁸⁰ However, instead of attributing the famine to the pricing policy, the state blamed World War I. It argued that the war forced peasants to abandon farming in order to work as soldiers. The higher prices, which the military offered, also tempted the peasants to sell all their maize. The Resident Officer for Zomba reported:

The shortage was partly due to the failure of the early rains, which necessitated repeating planting of the gardens thereby reducing considerably and in many cases competing exhaustingly, the small stocks of grains which were being conserved for food until the next harvest, and also in large measure to the fact that gardens planted during the previous seasons were much smaller than usual owing to the numbers of the able bodied men having been called out from military service of various descriptions leaving only the older men, women and children to cultivate on the ground. The high prices which were also being paid by the military for all kinds of native foodstuffs also tempted the natives to dispose of grain, which they

⁷⁹ Ibid

⁸⁰ Ibid.

would, under ordinary circumstances, have retained for their own use.⁸¹

The effects of the famine were also exacerbated by the colonial policy of not giving free food relief to the peasants. To avoid perpetuating a dependency syndrome, the state argued that it could only make foodstuffs available to peasants on sale and on a food-for-work basis.⁸² However, most peasants in the area contended that they had insufficient money to purchase relief maize whose prices were highly inflated by the state in seasons of famine.⁸³

Before the drought, the Resident Officer from Zomba warned the Food Controller against the danger of reducing maize prices. He argued that, "The system of only putting the minimum quantity absolutely necessary to avoid famine on the market means that anyone who has some maize for sale can always find some friend who has failed to obtain supply in the market and who is also willing to pay any price to get it."⁸⁴ Furthermore, the Officer argued that price reductions would discourage peasants from supplying foodstuffs on the local market, and this would lead to food shortages. True to the Resident Officer's fears, the peasants from Zomba stopped selling maize on the local market after the Food Controller had ignored the warning. As a result, the Resident Officer had to send his *capitao* out to Chikala to acquire maize where it was available in abundance. The results were still disappointing. For example, after two months of food hunting, the *capitao* only managed to obtain one ton of maize.⁸⁵ In addition, the advice for the *capitao* to open buying markets within the villages at Nyamba and Chikwewu, did not yield much peasant

⁸¹ MNA S1/21/19 Monthly Reports Zomba District, 1918-1919.

⁸² Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of the Agriculture and Forestry Department year Ending 31 March 1919.

⁸³ MNA S1/21/19 District Monthly Reports, Zomba, 1918-1919. This was captured from a memo by the Resident Officer to the Governor on 18 December 1918.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

maize sales. Finally, when the Resident Officer inquired from chiefs Malemia, Kumtumanji, Mwambo, Kimu and other subordinate chiefs, he found that peasants were not happy with the low prices being offered by the state for maize purchases.⁸⁶

State-peasant-settler relations became worse when the government embarked on constructing a railway line from Blantyre to the Mozambican port of Nacala soon after the drought in 1919.⁸⁷ In constructing this railway, the state wanted to ease the transportation of cash crops from the country to the world market. Since the state employed thousands of workers on the project, it subsequently needed more foodstuffs to feed them all.⁸⁸ So the state reduced further the maize quotas set aside for settlers in order for it to buy maize from the peasants. In reaction, the settlers submitted a petition to the House of Commons in London to force the colonial authority in the country to reverse its decision.⁸⁹

Surprisingly, the state amended the foodstuffs ordinance into the Native Foodstuffs (Amendment) Ordinance in 1920.⁹⁰ The revised ordinance prohibited further the distribution of maize from one place to another, whether the country had abundant maize or not. The ordinance also empowered the state to bar settlers completely from relying on peasants for the supply of foodstuffs. The state was of the view that the settlers' demands for foodstuffs tempted the peasants to sell the very foodstuffs they reserved for their subsistence. It also

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ For details, see L. Vail, "The Making of an Imperial Slum: Nyasaland and Its Railways, 1895-1935," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 16, No. 1, 1975, pp. 89-112; L. Vail, "Railway Development and Colonial Underdevelopment: The Nyasaland Case," in R. Palmer and N. Parsons (eds), *The Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*, Los Angeles: University of California, 1977, pp. 365-395.

⁸⁸ Mandala, "Feeding and Fleecing the Native," p. 522.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p. 514.

⁹⁰ Nyasaland Protectorate, The Native Foodstuffs (Amendment) Ordinance of 1920.

felt that it was unfair for the settlers, who had plenty of land, resources, employees and tenants, and had refused to participate in food production, to be buying maize from the peasants.⁹¹ However, as noted above, the state was not necessarily trying to protect the peasants through this legislation. Instead, it wanted to gain monopoly over the purchase of peasants' maize in the face of droughts and the growing number of employees it had to feed. In doing this, the state also argued that overproduction of maize was causing a great deal of soil infertility. Through the ordinance, therefore, the state wanted to empower the Agriculture Department to legally bar settlers from relying on peasants for the supply of foodstuffs.⁹² However, these laws discouraged peasants from producing food surplus to be used in times of unprecedented food crisis due to droughts, floods and locust invasions. With the prohibition of beer, peasants had no strong incentive for producing maize surplus in the country.

Sensing the danger in which they were, the settlers petitioned the Governor and the members of the Legislative Council to reverse the law. They argued that "the Bill constituted an unwarrantable interference with the right of the native producers to sell their produce on the best market and is therefore unjust to the native growers. Considering the high prices he has to pay for all European goods and the probability of increased taxation, your petitioners are of the opinion that the native producer is entitled to reap the full benefit of a free and unrestricted market of his produce."⁹³ Instead of reversing the ordinance, the Governor admonished the settlers to desist from appropriating peasants' foodstuffs. Rather, he encouraged the settlers to produce foodstuffs for their tenants and employees.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of the Agriculture and Forestry Department Year Ending 31 March 1912.

⁹³ MNA S1/1479/19 Petition: From the Chamber of Agriculture and Commerce to His Excellency, the Governor and Members of the Legislative Council.

⁹⁴ Nyasaland Protectorate, Foodstuffs Ordinance, 4-17 March 1920.

The peasants reacted to the state's refusal to reverse the legislation in 1920 by not selling their produce on the regular market. Instead, they sold it informally to traders, especially Indians, who used to visit them. Some of the Indians had relocated to the rural areas to have a monopoly over peasant produce. Since the state did not have sufficient staff to monitor compliance with the policy, it was easy for these traders to buy from the peasants.⁹⁵ The Indians also used to supply goods on credit for the peasants to pay in foodstuffs during the harvesting seasons.⁹⁶

Conclusion

In assessing the impact of state power, John McCracken drew our attention to the variations by which state policies affected rural communities and the manner in which these policies paradoxically created space for peasants' survival within state hegemony. This chapter has shown that peasants who engaged in food production also experienced varied impacts of colonial capitalism. Thus, despite colonial exploitative policies, the peasants in Malawi were still able to produce sufficient food for their subsistence and other needs. The peasants took advantage of the prevailing tension among the settlers, missionaries and colonial officials in order to challenge agricultural policies that were exploitative and thus create space for expanding the production of food crops within state hegemony. As such, African agency in the food sector in early colonial Malawi went beyond control of family labour to peasants' rational and tactful manipulation of the policies the state instituted to marginalize Africans. This is understandable, too, for the colonial state that was understaffed, and confronted with a settler community that was cynical, needed the labour and foodstuffs of the peasants for its own survival. Thus, state power was extremely limited, and subject to African agency. Its ability to undermine peasant agriculture was minimal.

⁹⁵ Murray, *A Handbook of Nyasaland*, p. 103.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

"Africa Is an Education": Vernacular Language and the Missionary Encounter in Nineteenth-Century Malawi

Harri Englund

Long before current calls to decolonize the writing of African history, John McCracken and Andrew Ross showed the important role played by Africans in the rise of the Livingstonia and Blantyre Missions.¹ For Ross, they included the various Yao, Mang'anja and Kololo chiefs whose own agendas shaped the fortunes of early Blantyre missionaries in the midst of tensions caused by slave-raiding and long-distance trade. Ross also put his evolving skills in Chinyanja to use to explore the history of Blantyre Mission through oral testimonies and texts such as Harry Kambwiri Matecheta's personal history as Blantyre's first ordained African minister.² McCracken's meticulously researched history of the Livingstonia Mission gave a careful account of the African polities in whose vicinity the Mission was established. Moreover, he set new standards to Central African historiography with a subsequent article utilizing the biographical approach pioneered in the historical study of Malawi by George Shepperson

¹ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: Christian Literature Association of Malawi, 1996; John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

² Harry Kambwiri Matecheta, *Blantyre Mission: Nkhani za Ciyambi Cace*, Blantyre: Hetherwick Press, 1951; translated as Harry Kambwiri Matecheta, *Blantyre Mission: Stories of Its Beginning*, Berlin: Wichern-Verlag, 2016, translated by Thokozani Chilembwe. The references in this chapter are to the original edition.

and Thomas Price's *Independent African*.³ While their study focused on the high-profile figure of John Chilembwe, McCracken's article brought to the fore three less-known Malawians, whose diverse experiences shed new light on the country's Christian and colonial past.⁴

While such studies made a distinct contribution to scholarship by expanding the purview from white missionaries to their African intermediaries, converts and adversaries, the *co-production* of knowledge – linguistic and spiritual, practical and political – must remain an interest in historical studies lest Afrocentric writing is to repeat the biases of its Eurocentric counterpart. For Scottish and Malawian agents came into contact through various mundane and religious encounters that tested the convictions all parties brought to the conversations. That they did not do so from an equal standing makes the encounters all the more challenging to understand. In this chapter, I discuss the influence of those encounters on two missionaries in the formative decades of the Blantyre Mission: David Clement Scott, who led the Mission from 1881 to 1898, and Alexander Hetherwick, who became its long-term head from 1898. The focus is on language learning and translation, the *sine qua non* of so much missionary work in nineteenth-century Africa.

McCracken hailed Scott as a "visionary,"⁵ while epithets such as "mystic" and "idealist" can also be found in the academic literature.⁶

³ George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African: John Chilembwe and the Origins, Setting and Significance of the Nyasaland Native Rising of 1915*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1958.

⁴ John McCracken, "'Marginal Men': The Colonial Experience in Malawi," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 15, No. 4 (1989), 3537-563.

⁵ John McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859-1966*, Oxford: James Currey, 2012, 47.

⁶ A.J. Hanna, *The Beginnings of Nyasaland and North-Eastern Rhodesia 1859-95*, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1956, p. 41.

Indeed, Scott approached his calling with political passion and philosophical rigour unseen among Scottish missionaries in Malawi.⁷ His confidence in Africans as his fellow workers in the Church earned him enemies among the white community, as did his view on Africans as the owners of the land on which some Europeans were starting to establish farms. His reputation for posterity is enshrined in what Hetherwick came to call his two monuments: the imposing church building in the present-day headquarters of the Blantyre Synod of the Church of the Central African Presbyterian (CCAP) and his magisterial *A Cyclopaedic Dictionary of the Mang'anja Language*.⁸ Yet Scott's legacy extends to several other areas of missionary influence. Ross listed them as "a rapidly growing primary school system, an apprenticeship programme, a growing literature in Yao and Nyanja, an efficient printing house, and, most important, a mushrooming African church."⁹ Called to lead the Mission in the aftermath of the failed first attempt by the Church of Scotland in Blantyre, Scott would seem to have achieved a resounding success. His departure, however, followed increasing controversy as complaints about his politics and theology mounted from both Scotland and Central Africa.

Where Scott was a visionary, Hetherwick was paternalistic in his approach to Africans.¹⁰ He had arrived in Blantyre already in 1883 and as Scott's right-hand man went through different phases in his evolution as a missionary. There can be little doubt about his alignment with African interests in matters of land tenure and schooling.

⁷ Inspiration for the present chapter comes not only from the work of John McCracken and Andrew Ross but also from the essay on David Clement Scott in Kenneth R. Ross, *Gospel Ferment in Malawi: Theological Essays*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 1995, pp. 107-125.

⁸ D. C. Scott, *A Cyclopaedic Dictionary of the Mang'anja Language Spoken in British Central Africa*, Edinburgh: Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland, 1892.

⁹ Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, p. 23.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 126-27; McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, pp. 173-74.

Moreover, when the British government flexed its muscle in the early 1890s to enforce taxation in villages, Hetherwick was one of the outspoken Blantyre missionaries to complain about the violent tactics.¹¹ As the new Protectorate developed its institutions, he became a member of the Legislative Council in 1908.¹² An able linguist, Hetherwick published an abbreviated version of Scott's dictionary, pursued further work in Chinyanja and Chiyao and took the initiative to convene an inter-missionary committee to begin the work on translating the Bible. Yet the two men's views on the nature and potential of vernacular languages diverged sharply. By exploring those views and the practical measures they inspired, it is possible to delve deeper into missionary history as intellectual history.

Although Scott and Hetherwick's social proximity cautions us against making their differences look overly dramatic, it is possible to identify in those differences a general pattern. In Scott's inspired celebration of African linguistic resources and Hetherwick's dour committee work lies a contrast that was to become all the more pronounced as the twentieth century dawned. It is a contrast between the ethos of attributing a basic unity to humankind and a paternalistic (and, in some cases, racist) division of humanity into civilized and uncivilized tongues and peoples. "By the late nineteenth century and the turn of the twentieth," Olufemi Taiwo has recently argued for the European encroachment on Africa, the egalitarian ethos "had been overthrown and supplanted by attitudes that questioned the viability of African agency, placed Africans at the bottom of the human ladder, and proceeded to treat them as if they were children."¹³ It is the viability of vernacular languages to carry not only the Gospel but a whole range of philosophical ideas that came to be questioned as

¹¹ Hanna, *The Beginnings*, 205-06; Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, p. 125; McCracken, *A History*, pp. 66-67.

¹² Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, p. 129.

¹³ Olufemi Taiwo, *How Colonialism Preempted Modernity in Africa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010, p. 87.

the seemingly more professional approach to translation emerged. Malawians have lived with the legacies of this questioning ever since, at times romanticizing vernacular languages as the authentic voices of "the village" but far more often denigrating their potential to carry meaning in the modern world.¹⁴ By rediscovering Scott's reflections, we may confront such legacies with a renewed interest in language as a window into political and moral dilemmas.

Language Ideologies

Scott and Hetherwick were both classically educated theologians, whose skills included the ability to read, and to translate from, the Bible in Hebrew and Greek. A revealing contrast in this regard can be found in the remarks they made on these ancient languages in comparison with the vernacular. Some four years after his arrival in Blantyre, Scott wrote to a close friend in Scotland that "Hebrew shines in a new light, and even Greek the civilization of the past has closer affinities with Mang'anja than the modern language of today."¹⁵ Fifteen years later, Hetherwick used the pages of the Mission magazine, *Life and Work in British Central Africa*, to pronounce that "Greek thought flows in a wholly different groove from Mang'anja or Nyanja thought."¹⁶ Whether or not the vernacular compared favourably with Hebrew and Greek – or indeed with the "modern language of today" – is a question that begins to unravel the differences in the two men's

¹⁴ "The village" and its "real" language featured in the speeches by Kamuzu Banda, Malawi's first president, under whose rule the official name of the language changed from Chinyanja to Chichewa. See McCracken, *A History*, p. 449. On Malawian attitudes to African languages, see Alfred Mtenje, "English Imperialism and Shifting Attitudes towards African Languages: The Case of Malawi," in Karsten Legère and Sandra Fitchat, (eds), *Talking Freedom: Language and Democratisation in the SADC Region*, Windhoek: Gamsberg Macmillan, 2004, pp. 53-65.

¹⁵ David Clement Scott to James Robertson, 5 January 1885, Edinburgh University Library, Special Collections, Gen. 717-10.

¹⁶ *Life and Work in British Central Africa (LWBCA)*, February 1900.

language ideologies. "Ideology" here has none of the negative connotations of false consciousness or deception that it has had in the Marxist meaning of the concept. Language ideology is, rather, what people think, or take for granted, about language.¹⁷ As such, it lends itself to empirical investigation without a prescriptive attitude on the researcher's part as to what language should be.

Scott's language ideology can be contrasted with a reading of the Bible that became influential in Africa and elsewhere during European colonialism – that it is an historical narrative in which to situate one's own salvation as a people.¹⁸ Scott's emphasis, on the other hand, was on shared humanity. Here was an alternative to the agenda attributed to much linguistic work by Christian missionaries in Africa, namely that "language, ethnicity, and territory were supposed to coincide."¹⁹ Rather than codifying a sense of peoplehood through his work of translation, Scott appears to have drawn upon the equally salient imaginary by which "Christianity tends to emphasize a universal rather than a territorial or ethnic-based sense of community."²⁰

From the outset, careful lexicographical work was one of Scott's first priorities upon arrival in Blantyre in 1881. His early correspondence contains comments on language learning that stressed the easy

¹⁷ Kathryn A. Woolard and Bambi B. Schieffelin, "Language Ideology," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 23, 1994. More recently, linguistic anthropologists have begun to prefer the notion of semiotic ideologies to underline the difficulties of confining the study of communication to language. See, for example, Webb Keane, "Mind, Surfaces, and Reasons in the Anthropology of Ethics," in Michael Lambek, ed., *Ordinary Ethics: Anthropology, Language, and Action*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2010, pp. 64-83.

¹⁸ See Joel Cabrita, *Text and Authority in the South African Nazareth Church*, Cambridge University Press, 2014; J.D.Y. Peel, *Religious Encounter and the Making of the Yoruba*, Indiana University Press, 2000.

¹⁹ Judith T. Irvine, "Subjected Words: African Linguistics and the Colonial Encounter," *Language and Communication*, 23(4), 2008, p. 338.

²⁰ Bambi Schieffelin, "Christianizing Language and the Displacement of Culture," *Current Anthropology*, 55, 2014, p. S228.

availability of the vernacular for the interested student. Pointing out that Chimang'anja was written phonetically, Scott wrote to his friend in Scotland that the language was "easily mastered."²¹ Although he reported to have "printed the syllables which include all the sounds in the language," it is not clear whether he had consulted existing word lists and descriptions. He was likely to have been at least aware of the grammar and word list compiled by Alexander Riddel, a Presbyterian missionary at Cape Maclear in 1880, itself based on the work by another missionary, Johannes Rebmann, entitled *Dictionary of the Kinyasa Language*, printed in 1877 but circulated as a manuscript before then.²² Yet even if he consulted these studies, Scott would not have been able to achieve his dictionary of an entirely different scope without extensive fieldwork. A feature consistent with his language ideology is that the dictionary has subsequently been discovered to contain words and phrases used over a vast area, not only in the immediate vicinity of the Mission.²³ Scott evidently collected them from a range of people, some of whom were immigrant labourers at the Mission or refugees fleeing slavers or abusive masters, while he also pursued further linguistic work as he visited areas west of the Shire Valley.

Ethnic labels came as easily to Scott as they did to his compatriots. "Hetherwick's mission is Yao; mine is Mang'anja," he affirmed in 1885, alluding to Hetherwick's newly-established outpost at Domasi.²⁴ Yet Scott's reflections on the language were integral to his humanistic-Christian vision of common humanity. Nowhere in those reflections is it possible to find a suggestion that Scott's linguistic work aimed at codifying "a people" in the parochial manner that much missionary effort subsequently unfolded. On the contrary,

²¹ Scott to Robertson, 5 January 1885.

²² Steven Paas, *Johannes Rebmann: A Servant of God in Africa before the Rise of Western Colonialism*, Bonn: VTR/VKW, 2011, p. 258.

²³ T. Price, "Nyanja Linguistic Problems," *Africa* 13(2), 1940, p. 128.

²⁴ Scott to Robertson, 5 January 1885.

towards the end of his tenure in Blantyre, Scott was moved to declare that the language was "a broad language, and the people a broad people. To be broad enough for Mahomet and Christian Missionary, and with room for more, is surely enough!"²⁵ Rather than being a parochially ethnic domain, let alone a primitive language without any prospect of development, the vernacular was thus not only resourceful but so capacious as to give expression to different world religions – *with room for more*.

Scott arrived at these comments through an intriguing, if somewhat eccentric, comparison with Hebrew.²⁶ In what was basically an elevation of the noun-class system in Bantu languages into a phenomenology, Scott observed that "there are no such things as phenomena pure and simple, each phenomenon is qualified or modified by the good offices of some other phenomenon, or of several." After giving examples of attributes and demonstratives in the vernacular, Scott wrote, "This is the main idea of the language and it throws wondrous light upon the essentials and the unity of grammatical idea in the human race." Hebrew also joined "one phenomenon to another somewhat similarly," but "it feels that the important phenomenon, the one qualified, *modifies itself* to serve the qualifying phenomena, that it may be served by them – it serves with girded loins because it is 'lord and master'." Scott emphasized "a hierarchy of speech in Hebrew under only one Lord" and affirmed that the vernacular gave this hierarchy "its willing obedience...while at the same time it has room for our Western emphasis and extra emphasis of time, so foreign to Eastern ideas." Far from being buried in its own narrow sphere, the vernacular linked disparate philosophies into a unity of "the human race."

In the "general guide" to his dictionary, Scott had several years earlier used the Biblical languages as his touchstones for comparative

²⁵ LWBCA, April 1897.

²⁶ *Ibid*.

linguistics.²⁷ Different moods of the Chimang'anja verb were "very like those of the Hebrew verb," while a "striking" analogy could be observed "between reduplication in the Greek verb and Mang'anja reduplication."²⁸ These and other grammatical features "point[ed] towards the establishment of a grammatical unity of speech and natural thought in all languages hitherto not recognized." In other words, rather than being confined to "a people," Chimang'anja provided insights into human language in general and promised similar revelations about other "languages hitherto not recognized." In this Christian humanism, the Biblical languages were the obvious repositories of the common human heritage, but the radical tenor of Scott's thought should not be lost. He put forward these ideas when it was far more common to assert the primitive or uncivilized nature of vernaculars, an attitude that would soon inform Hetherwick's suggestion that Anglicized coinages had to be launched where the vernacular was seen to be wanting in its semantic range. In the meantime, Scott signed off his dictionary with the words that were likely to baffle his readers:

Enough is known of the languages to get at the heart of the people. We wholly believe that language is the poetic or creative attempt of a people to incarnate will and spirit in sound and word, and that it is neither a copy of nature, nor an unconscious reproduction of it, nor spasmodic sound. The consciousness by which it is formed is poetic and prophetic, not interpretative; it remains for the spirit bevisioned of a Christian civilization, in the faith of the Son and of the ministry of the Spirit, to interpret these voices for the salvation of the world.²⁹

No doubt it was words like these, which Scott appears to have cultivated from his writing to his sermons to his everyday conversations, that led to Hetherwick's comment decades later that Scott

²⁷ David Clement Scott, *A Cyclopaedic Dictionary of the Mang'anja Language Spoken in British Central Africa*, Edinburgh: Foreign Mission Committee of the Church of Scotland, 1892.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xx.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. vi.

"lived and moved on a plane high above his fellows – and in consequence very many failed to understand him."³⁰ Yet as Hetherwick went on to remark, Scott was also a practical man who pursued the objectives of an industrial mission even when the Foreign Mission Committee in Edinburgh had ruled out such objectives in the aftermath of the first attempt in Blantyre.³¹ In his language ideology, Scott was not less keen to show the practical consequences of the lofty ideals he was able to identify in the vernacular. Precisely by speaking to the whole humanity, the vernacular carried lessons for us all. One example is the entries in his dictionary that sometimes went far beyond what a mere definition would look like. The entry for *mfumu* (chief) inspired far-reaching reflections on political power.

With all his seeming power, the chief is hedged in as much as, perhaps more than, the most constitutional minister in the most civilized states; his wealth is merely a greater power of distribution, for his personal state is not extravagant; he does not live for "self-aggrandisement"; ordinary hereditary chiefs have several but not enormous numbers of wives.³²

Because it was a part of the human heritage on a par with other languages, the vernacular furnished comparative insights into ways of life and government. While the chief compared favourably to "the most constitutional minister in the most civilized states," other concepts could turn Scott's gaze to the very way in which European missionaries had been trained to approach African practices. With regard to *mankhwala* (medicine),³³ "nowhere," he wrote, "is there found the thick darkness which one is taught to look for – in fact the darkness is no more impenetrable than it is in civilized lands, and the same desideratum has its full effect, namely, a true man to needy

³⁰ Alexander Hetherwick, *The Romance of Blantyre: How Livingstone's Dream Came True*, Edinburgh: Lassodie Press, 1931, p. 34.

³¹ See e.g. Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, pp. 63-65.

³² Scott, *A Cyclopaedic Dictionary*, p. 347.

³³ Scott rendered the word as *mankwala*.

man."³⁴ "Thick darkness" or superstition had no place in the moral-theological universe in which Scott's thought operated. More often than not, the vernacular issued an invitation to learn rather than to condemn. As these examples show, it could also unsettle the status of the missionary's language and civilization as the yardstick with which everything else had to be measured. After all, Scott's introduction to the dictionary emphasized "the salvation of the world," not any one of its peoples in isolation.

The status reversal could take place at the very core of missionary practice. Scott's early expectation for the work of translation was that the ensuing Bible would "be more level to the comprehension of all than the English Bible has ever yet been."³⁵ The English language could also recede to a secondary status in preaching. "It is in Mang'anja," Scott told his friend in Scotland, "that I often get most insight and even material for my English sermons."³⁶ Scott described a particularly moving occasion during the Chimang'anja service when he realized the breakthrough in communication he had achieved. "I never was able to preach more simply nor more freely," and so intense seemed the attention given to his sermon by the women, men, girls and boys in his congregation that "I had to stop at the end for fear of breaking down solely through the solemnity of the feeling." Such personal, visceral experiences indicated that the lofty ideals in Scott's language ideology were far more than mere philosophical speculation.

Africa is an Education

The reversals were nowhere more strikingly expressed than in Scott's maxim that Hetherwick was fond of passing on to European newcomers to Africa: "Africa is an education; here you come to

³⁴ Scott, *A Cyclopaedic Dictionary*, pp. 315-16.

³⁵ Scott to Robertson, 5 January 1885.

³⁶ Scott to Robertson, 16 June 1890.

school again."³⁷ Another expression was that "it is a liberal education to get to understand the African, and European blunders and failures in Africa chiefly arise from want of this."³⁸ In its most literal meaning, the injunction made Europeans take language classes at the Mission. In the early 1890s, Scott conducted Chimang'anja classes for Europeans on Thursday evenings after service.³⁹ To encourage attendance, the Mission magazine proposed to run monthly competitions in which the best answers to a series of questions in Chimang'anja would be given monetary prizes. Little was said of this proposal subsequently, and while learning the vernaculars remained high on the agenda among missionaries at Blantyre, Scott's vision of truly inter-racial services never came to its full fruition.

In a letter to his friend in Scotland, Scott stated in 1889 that "the Church must be a European-native church."⁴⁰ With the words "the native language" underlined, he reported that "I have proposed a native Church for European and native in *the native language* for Sunday morning services – and am just waiting to see it gather shape and approval and definite promise of success." In 1890, the Mission magazine carried this notice:

It is proposed sometime to change the morning English Service into a Native one; the hymns and service book will be worthy of the dignity of the united worship of Native and European; the translation of the Bible will be well and carefully done, and the address studied and prepared just as in English. The lessons and sermon will be easily followed by almost all the Europeans; and the benefit of worship in clear Mang'anja will be felt by all. The all-important communion of Native and European in one worship before God will elevate all who take part; and the founding of the Native Church in this land will be fostered by a civilization Christian in deed as well as in name.⁴¹

³⁷ Hetherwick, *The Romance of Blantyre*, p. 155.

³⁸ LWBCA, November 1892.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Scott to Robertson, 10 May 1889.

⁴¹ LWBCA, May 1890.

Language once more became a vehicle both practical and philosophical in Scott's vision of race relations. Far from being the exclusive property of its native speakers, and a tool appropriated by missionaries, the vernacular offered spiritual rewards to everyone. More precisely, language learning and use in the Church would be one way of achieving the unity that the prosperity of all demanded. By the end of 1891, when the Protectorate had been formally established, Scott was compelled to elaborate on his vision:

We are working here for the unity of the Church European and African. It has been the aim of the Mission during all those past years to bring and keep together the two parts of the Church – native and foreign. It would be a great blow to the Church of Christ should there arise in the future such a severance as we confess exists in the Colony between the native and European portions of it. Both portions will greatly increase as time goes on. We long to see them increasing together – not side by side but as one.⁴²

Scott went on to state that "the prosperity of the European and of the native are one. We mutually depend on each other. The interests of both are similar. Both will suffer or both will prosper together. The interests of labour and of trade bind us together. To administer the country justly for the native is to administer it also justly for the European." Beyond this careful balancing of interests across the racial divide, Scott attributed special vulnerability to the European in Central Africa. Of all his striking phrases, the one with which Scott ended this passage is perhaps the most startling of all: "In God's great wisdom the native may be saved without us, but we doubt if we here can be saved without the native."

Closely aligned to Scott's vision of the vernacular as the *lingua franca* of the African Church was his determination to see Africans in positions of authority. As he was becoming more articulate about racial unity and equality, he also introduced the role of African

⁴² LWBCA, December 1891.

deacons who, once "ordained," were on the path towards ministry in the Church.⁴³ As deacons, they became a consultative body for Scott.⁴⁴ When Scott allowed Mlanje Mission to operate without European staff, a fierce response ensued from the white interests that had begun to emerge in opposition to Blantyre on the pages of *The Central African Planter*. R.S. Hynde, originally a teacher at Domasi, had established the newspaper and gave a flavour of its views by stating that "no native can, or will for years to come, be able to fulfil, even in a moderate degree, the place of a European."⁴⁵ In a similar vein, the Mission magazine itself had a few years earlier carried an outspoken opinion piece by a "European colonist."⁴⁶ Seeking to counter the criticisms published earlier in the magazine of settlers' rough methods of land acquisition and labour recruitment, the writer stated that "the light of civilization has only been burning in the Shire Highlands for some sixteen years, and the aborigines are therefore still like children, and we should bear in mind that good old precept – 'Spare the rod, spoil the child'."

Against the increasing infantilization of the African, Scott issued various corrections and counter-arguments over a number of years. To the "European colonist," for example, he responded by explaining that the local practice of keeping some fields fallow by no means entitled the settlers to evict people from their land, or to destroy their crops in search of labour.⁴⁷ Besides, the meagre salary that the settler paid in cloth meant that "the value of the natives' work to him is far more than the amount he pays for it." Scott also drew a disturbing parallel between the new forms of compulsory labour and slavery: "There is but a step between this condition and slavery, and the step is not a long one." The Blantyre Mission under Scott's leadership also

⁴³ Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, pp. 151-52.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

⁴⁵ "Mlanje Mission," *The Central African Planter*, May 1896.

⁴⁶ LWBCA, March 1992.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

became Cecil Rhodes's most vocal critic in Central Africa by early on warning against allowing the territory to be ruled by a chartered company rather than a government. In 1890, Scott wrote that "the horrors that loom in the near future of prison, flogging, deportation, and taxation, the horrors of irresponsible oppression of chiefs and people, are the advent of a new slavery."⁴⁸ "No one objects to taxation," he stated, "when that taxation is spent *for the country*." The issue was, rather, that "a Chartered Company is not a government and never can be. To be ruled by such is to be ruled for commercial ends by absentee directors and shareholders whose real interests are only served by tangible dividends." Two years after his arrival as the Protectorate's first Commissioner and Consul-General in 1891, Harry Johnston wrote to Rhodes to explain that the company's scheme had stumbled on the "bitter hatred" towards it among the Blantyre missionaries.⁴⁹

The threat posed by Rhodes thus averted, Scott's own position was no longer as stable as it had been in the beginning. Scott had become embroiled in increasingly bitter contests of both theological and political nature with settlers, administrators and even some of the new Scottish staff at Blantyre. The primacy of the vernacular in race relations and in theology had failed to take root. Allegations about "ritualism" and other non-Presbyterian elements in his services had reached Edinburgh, no doubt serving the interests of settlers who found him inconveniently vocal in his defence of Africans' right to their land.⁵⁰ A curious twist to Scott's commitment to the vernacular came in Edinburgh's early response to these allegations. A letter sent on behalf of the Foreign Mission Committee demanded "the full translations of the services" at Blantyre and Domasi.⁵¹ Rather than bringing black and white together, or facilitating the spread of the

⁴⁸ LWBCA, October 1890.

⁴⁹ Ross, *Gospel Ferment*, pp. 119-20; McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p. 57.

⁵⁰ Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, p. 162.

⁵¹ 23 March 1894. National Library of Scotland (NLS), MS 7553.

Gospel, the vernacular used by the missionaries was now feared to contain subversive ideas that needed to be translated back into English!

Translation Trouble

Linguistic and literary translation, if it is to be a creative process, must test the openness of languages for new concepts and ideas. This is the insight in twentieth-century critical translation theory inspired by Walter Benjamin.⁵² To his dictum that the purpose of translation is to renew rather than reproduce language was added the injunction "to leave our language and go to the other" when translating.⁵³ Such a creative move was also Scott's intent. While the comparisons to Hebrew and Greek proved the universal scope of the vernacular, Scott's comments on the language with which it was in the most immediate relationship showed his commitment to translation as a creative and transformative process. English, as "the modern language of today," was found wanting in carrying the Gospel when confronted with the powers of the vernacular. The Bible in Chimang'anja would renew the language not only for the native speakers but for anyone interested in the Gospel.

Industrious as he was, translating the Bible was not one of Scott's achievements. In his early correspondence with Robert Laws of Livingstonia Mission, Scott indicated that "I have translated the first 8 pages of Genesis carefully according to the Hebrew, and use it in

⁵² Walter Benjamin, "The Task of the Translator," in Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet (eds), *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992, transl. Harry Zohn, pp. 71-82 [1923].

⁵³ José Ortega Y. Gasset, "The Misery and Splendor of Translation," in Rainer Schulte and John Biguenet (eds), *Theories of Translation: An Anthology of Essays from Dryden to Derrida*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992 [1937], pp. 93-112, transl. Elizabeth Gamble Müller.

school."⁵⁴ This correspondence also conveys Scott's somewhat reluctant acceptance of the division of labour between the two men in translating the Bible. He praised Laws's efforts to translate the New Testament and bemoaned the tediousness of his own in translating the Old Testament: "I am anxiously awaiting for the N.T. Most gladly would I have translated it. You do not know the joy that such a work is to me and how it fits with my mental and spiritual attitude."⁵⁵ "As to the O.T.," he added, "I do not want to do it from any other motive than that it falls to me in God's giving." Anticipating that Laws's work would be complete before his, Scott remarked in another letter, "strange how things are reversed. The new is first now – then comes the old in full understanding."⁵⁶ In the end, Scott's published translations of the Scriptures were the Gospels of Matthew and Mark in 1892, Luke and John in 1893, and Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians in 1894.⁵⁷

It was on Hetherwick's initiative after Scott's departure that a systematic and long-term collective effort yielded the entire Bible in what the translators now called Chinyanja (or Union Nyanja). Before the committee had embarked on its work, language learning and use came to reflect Hetherwick's evolving approach to the deepening colonization of the territory. As mentioned, he was to grow into an "establishment" figure quite unlike Scott, and for Ross it was "a drastic departure from D. C. Scott's vision of Africa's future, where the role of the European was to be an aid to African development and always secondary to African needs."⁵⁸ At the same time, his involvement in the Legislative Council and the Blantyre Chamber of Commerce often served a moderating purpose vis-à-vis settler and colonial interests. Yet the paternalistic aspect of this moderate – as

⁵⁴ David Clement Scott to Robert Laws, 3 May 1882, NLS, MS 7903.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Scott to Laws, 14 November 1882, NLS, MS 7903.

⁵⁷ Ross, *Gospel Ferment*, p. 110.

⁵⁸ Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, p. 130.

opposed to Scott's radical and visionary – liberalism can be detected in Hetherwick's language ideology. Scott's affection for his African co-producers of knowledge would hardly have allowed him to describe the moment of linguistic consultation in the terms that Hetherwick used:

Within his tiny study he sits, a solitary white man, at a rough table on which lie piles of small slips of paper to which he refers again and again. Round him are squatted half a dozen natives in garments of varied hue and odour with whom he is talking, asking them questions in turn, now referring to his slips, now to the human figures before him, sometimes getting an answer, sometimes meeting with silence, for the head of the questioned one has sunk lower till chin rests on chest – the owner overpowered by the noontide heat.⁵⁹

The moment described in this passage, no doubt with some humorous intent, sees a "solitary white man" as the producer of knowledge, the one with questions for the "human figures" wearing "garments of varied hue and odour" to answer. The *co-production* of linguistic knowledge as a relationship between people with different linguistic repertoires seems rather remote here. In fairness to Hetherwick, it must be noted that nor did Scott acknowledge any individual collaborators in his dictionary or published translations as contemporary linguists and translators would be expected to do. Hetherwick, on the other hand, ended his preface to the new edition of the dictionary by singling out Che Ndombo, "Headman, Christian, Linguist, and Leper; on whose familiarity with various African tongues both [Scott and Hetherwick] were privileged to draw."⁶⁰ As mentioned, Scott obtained material for his dictionary from a variety

⁵⁹ W. P. Livingstone, *A Prince of Missionaries: The Rev. Alexander Hetherwick of Blantyre, Central Africa*, London: James Clarke, 1931, p. 191.

⁶⁰ Alexander Hetherwick, "Preface," in David Clement Scott, *Dictionary of the Nyanja Language*, edited and enlarged by Alexander Hetherwick, London: Lutterworth Press, 1929, p. vii.

of people, but it is also clear that at least the final stages of its preparation involved close collaboration with only one or two individuals. He took two Malawians with him on a two-year holiday in Scotland in 1885-87 when much of the desk work on the dictionary was completed. While Mungo Chisuse took up a printing apprenticeship at Edinburgh's House of Nelson,⁶¹ Nacho Ntimawanzako worked, along with his own education, with Scott on the dictionary.⁶² The nature of their relationship with Scott was clearly collaborative to the extent that he gave back as well as received in the relationship – Scott paid Ntimawanzako's expenses in Scotland and gave Chisuse the exceptional opportunity a few years before he had even been baptized.⁶³

In the measure of distance that Hetherwick cultivated between himself and his language tutors lay also the possibility of attributing radical difference to English and the vernacular. His and Scott's thoughts on linguistic change are illuminating in this regard. In 1900 when he had assumed the leadership of the Mission and the editorship of its magazine, Hetherwick lamented that "so few Europeans learn the native language."⁶⁴ His lament alluded to the failure of Scott's dream of inter-racial services conducted in Chimang'anja, but the main purpose of Hetherwick's piece – entitled "Wanted – Linguists" – was to admonish Europeans and "native speakers" alike about the spread of the language's "pidjin" forms at the expense of its purity. Uninterested to learn the grammar and idioms in the vernacular, Europeans were guilty of "infecting" it with expressions that should not "pass as the native language nor any language under the sun." The pathological state of affairs would be passed on from

⁶¹ LWBCA, December 1897; Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, p. 118; see also John McCracken, "Mungo Murray Chisuse and the Early History of Photography in Malawi," *The Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 61, No. 2, 2008, pp. 1-18.

⁶² Ibid, 80; Matecheta, *Blantyre Mission*, p. 6.

⁶³ Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, p. 83.

⁶⁴ LWBCA, April 1900.

one European to another as "the newcomer learns from the old hand and the evil spreads." "Native speakers" would likewise think that speaking the corrupt lingo was the right thing to do. "Forms of speech thus creep into the language of the country, and the pure well of native idiom is defiled."

The remedy to the "infection" was readily available. "As a foreign language," Hetherwick observed, "Mang'anja is easy of acquirement compared with a European tongue or any of the 'dead languages'." A further inducement to learn it could be found in the Europeans' self-interest. In a recommendation that would be hard to imagine stemming from Scott's pen, Hetherwick assured his readers that "nothing gives a European more influence with the natives than the ability to harangue them in their own tongue." Yet some of Scott's idealism survived in the image Hetherwick conjured to entice his readers to collect information on customs and folklore with their newly-acquired linguistic prowess: "How many a dreary evening could a planter on a lonely plantation thus fill in with profit to himself and interest to others."

While pidgin "defiled" the purity of the vernacular, its proper domain, when it was not deployed to "harangue" the colonized subjects, was custom and folklore. In Scott's understanding, by contrast, the vernacular was a subject of historical change. In a characteristically high-minded expression, he ended the guide to his dictionary with insisting that the vernacular "changes from time to time as it has a right to do, it throws out branches, it can create fresh forms, it is living in every atom, and yet it never loses the dignity of its spirit birth."⁶⁵ Rather than being frozen in time, the vernacular had a "right" to change as a living language. Just as Scott was not unduly concerned to delineate "a people" as its proper owner, so too had he none of the fear for "impure" forms that exercised Hetherwick.

⁶⁵ Scott, *A Cyclopaedic*, p. xxii.

Where the vernacular was found lacking in concepts, Hetherwick had no hesitation in advocating change. Such a thought came to him already before he had convened the first meeting of the Bible translation committee in May 1900. In the two instalments of the article entitled "Some Translation Difficulties," he explored a number of issues confronting the translator of the Bible into Chimang'anja / Chinyanja.⁶⁶ Among others was the above-mentioned conviction that "Greek thought flows in a wholly different groove from Mang'anja or Nyanja thought," the former characterized by "its passive voice and its oblique constructions" and the latter by "vividness, action, present perception."⁶⁷ In a marked contrast to Scott's expectation that the Chimang'anja Bible would become superior to the English one, Hetherwick held the King James Authorized Version of 1611 as "the best type of a translation from the original of the New Testament tongue. It is expressed in the very purest English, and it is faithful in the highest degree to the then Received text of the sacred volume. Nowhere do we find our tongue modified or influenced by the classical idioms of the original. It preserves for us and as long as our language is spoken will continue to preserve the 'well of English undefiled'."

Hetherwick was considerably less sanguine about the prospects of Chimang'anja/Chinyanja to offer appropriate concepts and idioms in the manner of English some centuries earlier. Because Chimang'anja /Chinyanja was "a vehicle almost entirely void of religious or theological phraseology," recourse had to be taken to more "civilized tongues." While long contact warranted Arabic influence on Swahili, translators into Chimang'anja/Chinyanja had to look elsewhere: "As regards Mang'anja or Nyanja we have no such past association with any civilized tongue. If any foreign language is to bear to Mang'anja the relationship that Arabic has borne to Swahili that language must be English." English words – or Anglicized Chimang'anja/Chinyanja

⁶⁶ LWBCA, February 1900 and March 1900.

⁶⁷ LWBCA, February 1900.

expressions such as *angelo* for "angel" or *chalichi* for "church" – were to be used where the vernacular lacked its own concepts.

Although Hetherwick identified parallels to the development of Biblical English in its own borrowing of foreign terms, he saw linguistic translation and religious conversion as two sides of the same coin. "Language being the vehicle of thought must submit to conversion as well as people." Unremarked in this statement was a relation of power in which one language appeared more advanced or "civilized" than the other. Even if English had no actual claim to be a holy language, the relationship between it and Chimang'anja / Chinyanja was asymmetrical, with the latter rather than the former having to change in the translation process.⁶⁸ If such a relationship was at variance with Scott's language ideology, Hetherwick's further remarks on the translators' responsibility undid whatever might have been left of Scott's philosophical legacy at Blantyre. The responsibility was grave, because the language belonged to a people. "Round the Holy Scriptures the language of every race and nation fashions itself. The seal placed now on the Yao or Nyanja translations will remain engraved forever on the religious language of these two tribes."

The Bible translation committee subsequently carried out its work over several years and published the translation in 1922, its claim to have launched a "Union Nyanja" somewhat undermined by the apparent unease over what speakers in Central and Southern Malawi saw as the use of one another's dialects in the text.⁶⁹ Indeed, by then, enough had happened to entrench "race," "nation" and "tribe," as Hetherwick put them, as the parameters within which differences between languages and dialects were debated. The committee, as so many of its counterparts during the same period in Africa, had embarked on the standardization of orthography and vocabulary,

⁶⁸ Compare William F. Hanks, "The Space of Translation," in Carlo Severi and William F. Hanks (eds) *Translating Worlds: The Epistemological Space of Translation*. Chicago: HAU Books, 2015, pp. 21-49.

⁶⁹ Price, "Nyanja," p. 132.

thus heralding the era of discontent over discrimination and exclusion on ethno-linguistic grounds.⁷⁰ In 1901, for the first time in Blantyre, two congregations were formed, one European and the other "native," Scott's vision (and practice) of multiracial worship was consigned to history.⁷¹ Writing from retirement in Scotland, Hetherwick would reflect on the existential gap between himself and "the African" that his decades in Malawi could not bridge. "To think as an African thinks," he confessed, "is an achievement impossible to me as a white man. The black man's whole upbringing, environment, and outlook, have raised a high wall between his mind and mine, that I have never got over."⁷² Christian humanism, and Scott's capacity to see something for everyone in an African vernacular, had come to an end.

Conclusion

Language ideologies can provide a window into political and moral controversies in unequal encounters. Humanism in a Christian key was in nineteenth-century Malawi a short-lived attempt to imagine the encounter between Europeans and Africans in terms of shared humanity. In David Clement Scott's thought, the encounter could even lead to reversals in status. The missionary would become the student, just as the African vernacular could be closer to the Biblical languages than English was. So capacious was the vernacular in this thinking that it could give expression not only to Christianity but to Islam and beyond. Scott had the ability to recognize something universal in what was to become a narrowly ethnic, if not racialized,

⁷⁰ For example, LWBCA, June and July 1900. See also Derek R. Peterson, "Vernacular," in Gaurav Desai and Adeline Masquelier, (eds), *Critical Terms for the Study of Africa*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018, pp. 331-45.

⁷¹ Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, pp. 178-79.

⁷² Alexander Hetherwick, *The Gospel and The African*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1932, p. 3.

domain as the twentieth century dawned. More than a century later, what are the prospects of learning from his language ideology?

Twentieth century was an era when so-called Third-World languages faced forcible transformation as the weaker parties in colonial and postcolonial encounters.⁷³ Desired knowledge seemed to inhere in languages introduced by European colonists. Many forces other than the Scottish missions contributed to the making of modern Malawi's ethno-linguistic divisions and to the high status enjoyed by English.⁷⁴ Yet Scott's language ideology found few proponents among the Scottish missionaries who stayed in Malawi beyond his tenure. Alexander Hetherwick's paternalism advised him to preserve the vernacular as the property of a people he would never fully understand. Robert Laws in Livingstonia, on the other hand, came to see language extinction as desirable while English would strike its roots as the universal means of communication:

Whatever may be said with regard to the advisability of preserving the native languages, no one with practical experience of work in many districts in Central Africa will hesitate to agree that the sooner many of these languages become extinct, the better for the peace, the prosperity, and the advancement of the country and its people. To the young in these regions, English is practically synonymous with progress.⁷⁵

While the legacy of Scott's language ideology is difficult to discern in present-day Malawi, the legacy of holding English in the highest

⁷³ Talal Asad, "The Concept of Cultural Translation in British Social Anthropology," in James Clifford and George E. Marcus (eds) *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986, pp. 157-58.

⁷⁴ Leroy Vail and Landeg White, "Tribalism in the Political History of Malawi," in Leroy Vail (ed), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989, pp. 151-92.

⁷⁵ Robert Laws, *Reminiscences of Livingstonia*, Edinburgh: Oliver and Boyd, 1934.

esteem shows no sign of abating. It informs, for example, many non-governmental organizations that use the distinction between English and "local" languages to mark status differences between those who know and those who need to be educated.⁷⁶ Alive and well is also the related infantilization of Malawians who do not have many years of formal schooling. A writer wanting to reach a wide readership described letting his ten-year old daughter read his drafts: "We must target the ten-year mind because the grasp and comprehension ability by most of our people is more or less at that level."⁷⁷ It is a bitter irony of history that a white Protestant missionary in the nineteenth century had more faith in Malawians than some Malawians have in the twenty first.

⁷⁶ Harri Englund, *Prisoners of Freedom: Human Rights and the African Poor*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006.

⁷⁷ Chiku Malunga, *Oblivion or Utopia: The Prospects for Africa*, Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2010, p. 27. See also Harri Englund, *Human Rights and African Airwaves: Mediating Equality on the Chichewa Radio*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011, pp. 4-8.

Mothercraft in the DRCM: *Mthenga* Newspaper, Missionary Wives and African Women, 1923 – 1934

Hendrina Adielle Kachapila

God couldn't be everywhere, so he created mothers to help him raise children. [Translated]¹

Introduction

John McCracken has made considerable contributions to the history and historiography of Malawi. Among the areas on which his work focuses are the development of Christianity, the colonial experience, and the relationship between economic change and the environment. One aspect that his work on Christianity has highlighted is the dearth of literature on the experiences of mission-based women: missionary wives and female missionaries.² It is with this background that this chapter focuses on the work of mission-based women of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission (DRCM) in colonial central Malawi in reconstructing a Christian version of mothercraft through the *Mthenga* newspaper from 1923 to 1934.³ The chapter demonstrates that although the mission-based women may have set out to formulate a discourse that would create the 'ideal' Christian mother, their writing showed an interplay of several forces that needed to be taken into account. These forces included interactions among missionary

¹ "Kwa Amai," *Mthenga*, Vol. 16, No. 5, January-February, 1934. According to the writer, this is a Jewish proverb on mothers and motherhood. However, a similar saying, "God couldn't be everywhere, and therefore he made mothers" is attributed to Rudyard Kipling.

² John McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1859-1966*, Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012, p. 108.

³ *Mtenga* or *Mthenga* is a Chewa/Nyanja word which means messenger.

wives, female missionaries and African women, the colonial state, the choice of medium and the language used in the discourse.

The chapter, which is largely based on archival data, examines the contents of the women's page in *Mthenga* newspaper between 1923 and 1934. As the discussion below demonstrates, *Mthenga* provides valuable evidence for assessing female experiences of missionary activity in the DRCM. It shows that missionary enterprise in colonial central Malawi was gendered in that the work of missionary wives and female missionaries essentially sustained the work of male missionaries and others. Furthermore, the newspaper afforded missionary women and African women opportunities to form vacillating alliances that engaged in multiple interrogations of women's space and place in Church and society. In addition, the contents of the women's page provide insights into ways in which the colonial state manipulated African motherhood through the DRCM's discourse and missionary space.

The DRCM and *Mthenga* in Historical Context

The DRCM was one of the societies that established missionary work in Nyasaland (Malawi) towards the close of the 19th century. Earlier missionary societies to the area were the Anglican Universities Mission to Central Africa (UMCA) in 1861, the Livingstonia Mission of the Free Church of Scotland in 1875 and the Blantyre Mission of the Established Church of Scotland in 1876. These societies were inspired to open mission stations in the country by British missionary-traveller, David Livingstone.⁴ The DRCM, on the other hand, was

⁴ David Livingstone was a British missionary-explorer who came to the Malawi area in the 1850s. He believed that as a precondition for the spread of Christianity, Africa needed to be opened to free trade and incorporated into the international economic system. Consequently, upon his return to Britain from his trans-continental journey he delivered speeches encouraging missionary societies to go and work in Africa. For details see, John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia*

dominated by the Murray family that settled in the Cape, South Africa in 1821 from Aberdeen, Scotland via Holland.⁵ In Nyasaland, the Mission opened its first station at Mvera in 1889. Other stations included Kongwe in 1894; Nkhoma in 1896 and Mlanda in 1902. Besides, the Mission took over Livulezi from the Livingstonia Mission in 1895. Subsequent expansion saw the DRCM operating ten stations by 1923, making "the Nyasa Mission... the fastest growing among the missions of the DRC."⁶

The DRCM contributed to the economic development of the region through the introduction of a cash economy, building improved road networks and agriculture. The mission became a hub for the improvement of transport, trade, farming and health long before the establishment of the first *boma* (British outpost) in central Nyasaland in 1898.⁷ According to Parsons, the DRC missionaries were men and women of the land who recognized the importance of improved agriculture for a country whose most reliable resources were land and agriculture. In this regard, Albert van der Westhuizen arrived in 1895 to lay the foundation for the mission's agricultural programme. He also organized the building of the road from Mvera to the Lake in Salima.⁸ Additionally, the mission made great impact at the level of small-scale industries: "... the DRC led all other

Mission in the Northern Province, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977. Reprinted with a new introduction in 2000, Blantyre: CLAIM; and McCracken, *A History of Malawi*.

⁵ Andrew Charles Murray established Mvera mission in conjunction with T.C.B. Vlok. At least five of Murray's siblings eventually joined him in missionary work at Mvera. See, J.W. Parsons, "Scots and Afrikaners in Central Africa: Andrew Charles Murray and the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Malawi," *The Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 1, 1998, 21-40.

⁶ Parsons, "Scots and Afrikaners," p. 27.

⁷ Parsons, "Scots and Afrikaners," p. 29.

⁸ P.F. Chifungo, "Women in the CCAP Nkhoma Synod: A Practical Theological Study of their Leadership Roles," PhD, University of Stellenbosch, 2014, p. 35; Parsons, "Scots and Afrikaners," p. 29.

missions in promoting village industries: wood and iron work, bark cloth, wool and linen, weaving and basket-making; tanning and leather work for boots and harnesses, soap and oil; bricks and roof tiles."⁹

Another area in which the mission made considerable contribution was education. Shortly after its establishment, the DRCM introduced a series of station and village schools. The original aim of these schools as with all missionary work was to convert the predominantly Chewa and Ngoni inhabitants of central Nyasaland to Christianity and to develop a Christian character in them. In line with this goal, the first school was opened at Mvera in 1890. By 1927, mission schools had multiplied to 727.¹⁰ The mission also promoted girls/women's education aimed at the creation of stable Christian families. The first teachers in the girls' schools were the unpaid wives of missionaries.¹¹ In addition, a number of single women joined the mission as teachers and nurses to work with African women and girls. For example, in 1895 Martha Murray introduced a boarding school for girls at Mvera.¹² This development would later spread to other mission stations. Locally, boarding schools for girls were referred to as *Kumadona*¹³ because they were mainly operated by wives of missionaries and female missionaries.

⁹ Parsons, "Scots and Afrikaners," p. 30.

¹⁰ Isaac Lamba, "The Cape Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Malawi: A Preliminary Historical Examination of its Educational Philosophy and Application, 1889-1931," *History of Education Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1984, p. 376.

¹¹ Parsons, "Scots and Afrikaners," p. 27.

¹² Chifungo, "Women in the CCAAP Nkhoma Synod," p. 34.

¹³ Kumadona comes from the word Dona. The title 'Dona' was given to female missionaries and wives of missionaries. The word has connotations of superiority over the indigenous population. It is derived from the Portuguese 'dona' meaning 'lady' and may have originated from language diffusion given the proximity of Portuguese speaking Mozambique.

The mission was also involved in the translation of the Bible through the work of its linguist, W.H. Murray who worked hand in hand with two missionaries of the Blantyre Mission, Alexander Hetherwick and Robert Napier and some Africans including Jonathan Sande, Ismael Mwale and Willebes Chikuse.¹⁴ This partnership led to the publication of the Chinyanja version of the New Testament in 1906. It would be some years, however, before the remainder of the Bible was translated and W.H. Murray contributed twenty-three years of his life to this endeavour.¹⁵ Furthermore, with the arrival of printing equipment from Scotland in 1907, the mission began the work of publishing literature for its converts. Of particular interest to this chapter was the publication of *Mthenga* (Message), a Chinyanja Christian newspaper, in 1909.¹⁶ The newspaper appeared six times a year and its annual subscription was six pence (6d).¹⁷

Mthenga was not the only missionary publication of its time. Others included *Kalilole* and *Life and Work* begun in 1881 and 1888 respectively by the Blantyre Mission; *Nyasaland Diocesan Quarterly* and *Mtenga Watu* in 1893 and 1895 respectively by the Anglicans at Likoma and *Livingstonia News* and *Vyaro na Vyaro* in 1908 and 1929 by the Livingstonia Mission.¹⁸ Such publications served, among other

¹⁴ J.L. Pretorius, "The Story of the Dutch Reformed Church Mission in Nyasaland," *The Nyasaland Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1957, p. 19.

¹⁵ Parsons, "Scots and Afrikaners," p. 29. The first edition of the Bible in Chichewa (*Buku Lopatulika ndilo Mau a Mulungu*) was published in 1922.

¹⁶ E. Chitsulo and G. Mang'anda, "Origins, Development and Management of the Newspaper Industry in Malawi," in E.B.Z. Kondowe, P. Kishindo and F. Mkandawire (eds), *Journalism in Practice in Malawi: History, Progress and Prospects*, Lilongwe: UNESCO, 2011, p. 3; P.J. Kishindo, "Use of Indigenous Languages in Malawi's Media," (Paper presented to the Lilongwe Press Club Seminar, Boadzulu Holiday Resort, Mangochi, September) 2009; Parsons, "Scots and Afrikaners in Central Africa," p. 30.

¹⁷ "Kolinga Mtenga," *Mtenga*, Vol. 1, No. 1, July, 1909, p. 1.

¹⁸ Kishindo, "Use of Indigenous Languages."

purposes, as a vehicle for reporting church developments and propaganda within the country and abroad, especially to mission sponsors. They also commented on various issues affecting Africans such as taxation, agriculture and disease. In addition, they consolidated Christian values and enhanced literacy in local communities.¹⁹

The editorial section of the first issue of *Mthenga* described the aim of the newspaper as follows:

In the early days of missionary work there was only one station with white missionaries. Currently, there are 14 stations with 1800 Christians, 3000 catechumens and over 300 African teachers and instructors. Missionary work has spread over a wide area and the work of God is increasing. It is difficult therefore to meet fellow Christians on a regular basis. We however need to communicate because we are one. *Mtenga* will unite us because we will read the same message (daily devotions, bible study, teachings etc). *Mtenga* will encourage us to pray for one another in good and bad times [translated].²⁰

Apart from addressing the spiritual needs of the various mission stations, *Mthenga* also aimed at publicizing various developments within and outside Nyasaland. Indeed, the newspaper did carry articles on the origins, prevention and cure of diseases and epidemics that periodically ravaged Nyasaland such as smallpox, influenza and rabies as well as the inferred potency of Western over traditional medicine. Political, economic and social developments, both local and international, were also covered by the newspaper. These included colonial taxes, the First World War, the Chilembwe Rising, new methods of crop and animal husbandry and results of population censuses.

The Introduction of a Women's Page in *Mthenga*

At face value the articles featured in *Mthenga* did not segregate on the basis of sex. The readership of the paper targeted both men and

¹⁹ Chitsulo and Mang'anda, "Origins, Development and Management," pp. 3f.

²⁰ "Kolinga Mtenga," *Mtenga*, Vol. 1, No. 1, July, 1909, p. 1.

women. It would seem however that the paper was widely circulated among men rather than women because women felt underrepresented in the paper. This was expected to change from January 1923 when *Mthenga* issued a specific women's page for the first time.²¹ Whether by design or not, the women's page titled *Kwa Amai* (To Mothers/Women) was located at the back of the paper. No name was given for the writer of the first issue. It was simply signed *Mai* (mother/woman), which makes it difficult to determine the identity of the author. In all likelihood, however, the page was written by a wife of a missionary or a female missionary due to certain references the page made to developments in South Africa. These would have been beyond the reach of most African women.

The writer provided the thinking behind the establishment of the page. She claimed that there was a general apathy towards *Mthenga* by women who considered it a men's publication because it did not address their special needs and interests as women. Consequently, the editors of *Mthenga* decided to establish *KwaAmai* to address the lacuna.²² Furthermore, the writer maintained that this was an apt development as the time had come for women in the DRC mission to have their own "words."

Let us make a pact to write and read our own words on our page. In future, if we develop more ideas, we might consider publishing a separate *Mtenga* for women. In the meantime, however, we thank the editors that one page in *Mtenga* is ours. Henceforth, we should not think of *Mtenga* as a men's publication. Make proper arrangements with your husbands to share *Mtenga* because apart from the regular articles in the paper, which we as women can benefit from, there is a special page that solely belongs to us [translated].²³

²¹ "Kwa Amai Onse," *Mtenga*, Vol. 5, No. 25, Jan-Feb, 1923, pp. 15-16.

²² "Kwa Amai Onse," *Mtenga*, Vol. 5, No. 25, Jan-Feb, 1923, p. 15.

²³ "Kwa Amai Onse," p. 16.

It was expected that through *Kwa Amai*, women would discuss the responsibilities of mothers in the maintenance of the physical and spiritual wellbeing of their children. Other issues of interest to women would also be addressed. Women were then urged to see the spread of mothercraft as their mission. They were expected to take advantage of situations in which they normally operated to talk about mothercraft. For instance, when chatting with friends, working and travelling, mothercraft was to be the focal point of dialogue.²⁴ According to the writer, this was not a new idea as it was in line with developments taking place in other parts of the world. Women in some countries had independent monthly publications where they taught one another their responsibilities as mothers and discussed other issues of special concern to women. In South Africa, for instance, Mothercraft was already well established at that time: "Christian women have an arrangement known as Mothercraft in English, *InblanganoYab'Ondblayo* or *UmsiziWabOndblayo* in isiZulu. In our language, we are calling it *Chidziwitso cha pa Umache* (Mothercraft)" [translated].²⁵

Locating Missionary Women in Historical Context

Scholarship on Christian missions in a colonial context has to a large extent cast missions and missionaries as agents of colonialism and empire.²⁶ In this scenario, women as wives of missionaries and as

²⁴ "Kwa Amai Onse," p. 16.

²⁵ "Kwa Amai Onse," p. 16.

²⁶ John and Jean Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution: Christianity, Colonialism and Consciousness in South Africa*, Vol. 1, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991. By the same authors, *Of Revelation and Revolution: The Dialectics of Modernity on a South African Frontier*, Vol. 2, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997; Andrew Porter, "Religion, Missionary Enthusiasm and Empire," in A. Porter (ed), *The Oxford History of the British Empire*, Vol. III: The 19th Century, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999; C.J. Korieh and R.C. Njoku (eds), *Missions, States and European Expansion in Africa*, New York: Routledge: 2007.

single or married professionals are understood to be cultural imperialists. Studies have demonstrated therefore that with mixed results these women used marriage, child rearing, personal and household hygiene, and girls education, among other devices, to distinguish civilized missionaries from heathen Africans, in particular, and superior Europeans from colonized peoples, more generally.²⁷ Binaries were indeed created in the colonies. However, some studies that pursue this line of thinking portray religion as a factor that made a clear-cut demarcation between European missionaries on the one hand and Africans on the other. Oftentimes, in a colonial setting, missionaries had to deal with two conflicting ideals: European superiority and a "Christian belief in the spiritual equality of all humans."²⁸ From a slightly different angle, some works warn us that when it comes to Christianity in colonial Africa, "one cannot really talk just about missionaries and Africans nor about a dialogue between them... Cultural agents and brokers were multiple."²⁹ What

²⁷ Barbara Ramusack, "Cultural Missionaries, Maternal imperialist, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865-1945," *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 1990, pp. 309-321; Jean Allman, "Making Mothers: Missionaries, Medical Officers and Women's Work in Colonial Asante, 1924-1945," *History Workshop*, No. 38, 1994, pp. 23-47; Lilian Siwila, "Feminist Critique of the Educational Model of Mabel Shaw Girls' Boarding Mission School in Zambia, 1915-1945 and its Effect on the Education of Girls," *Scriptura*, Vol. 116, No. 1, 2017, pp. 1-12.

²⁸ Rebecca Hughes, "Visions of Friendship and Equality: Representations of Women in Missionary Propaganda in Interwar Britain," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association*, Vol. 24, No. 2, 2013, p. 357.

²⁹ T. Ranger, "Christian Missions, Capitalism and Empire: The State of the Debate," Lecture delivered at the Centre of Mission Studies on 21 June, 2005; Elizabeth Elbourne, "Word Made Flesh: Christianity, Modernity and Cultural Colonialism in the Work of Jean and John Comaroff," *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 108, No. 2, 2003, pp. 435-459.

is more, "Christianity was so soon out of the hands of the missionaries and settlers who brought it."³⁰ It was promulgated by different groups on both sides of the divide.

This has influenced studies that emphasize the forging of friendships and close relationships between missionary-based women and African women. For instance, using the writings of Mabel Shaw of Mbereshi and Cicely Hooper during the interwar period, Hughes explored how "religion served as a bridge between missionary women and colonized women, acting to subvert in particular instances the racial and cultural boundaries that had been erected in prior decades."³¹ According to Hughes, the two missionary women prevailed upon their audience in Britain to cultivate greater appreciation of African culture in Christianity. They also advocated for the economic empowerment of African women and promoted the idea of giving leadership positions in the Church to African women. In a similar manner, Prevost's work shows how through the Mothers Union, education, medicine, marriage and scripture, missionary women and African women in Uganda, Madagascar and Britain forged a shared sense of Christian womanhood which impacted progressive developments in Britain, notably feminism and anti-imperial social movements.³²

Coming to the Malawian context, McCracken has rightly pointed out that on the eve of the First World War the presence of women was steadily increasing in many Christian missions:

Although little about them appears in the literature, mission-based women were now playing increasingly important roles: as 'missionary wives,'

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Hughes, "Visions of Friendship," p. 357.

³² Elizabeth Prevost, *The Communion of Women: Missions and Gender in Colonial Africa and the British Metropole*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

officially overlooked ‘helpmeets’ to their husbands but sometimes very much more, as teachers and nurses...³³

From the limited available literature on missionary women in Malawi, a number of issues have been raised, including, difficulties of making a home in a new and foreign land, the practical realities of missionary work and the cordial and not so cordial interactions between wives of missionaries and women missionaries.³⁴ One aspect of missionary women’s life deserves mention here. Missionary women, especially in the post-First World War period were influenced by social movements taking place in their home countries, primarily Britain. Evidence indicates that they tried to use insights from feminism, for instance, to negotiate their involvement in the missions. This shows that missionary women did not always support male missionary ideas and agendas. The frustration of Mamie Martin, a university educated wife of Jack Martin a missionary in the Livingstonia mission, illustrates this point. In 1924 there was a conference of many Christian missions operating in Nyasaland, including the DRCM. Only three presentations at the seven days conference were devoted to women’s work: teaching, nursing and home management:

This was all the time that was devoted to discussion about Women’s Work. I think it was a down right disgrace. Some of us registered strong protests and held a meeting of our own. Men say ‘Raise the women and you will raise the men’ and ‘The status of a people is the status of its womanhood’- and other platitudes. Words, mere empty words. One thing I am glad of – there is a woman on the new Committee for arranging about the next Conference... Just fancy never having had a woman before! And then boast about our

³³ McCracken, *A History of Malawi*, p. 108.

³⁴ Margaret Sinclair, *Salt and Light: The Letters of Jack and Mamie Martin in Malawi, 1921-28*, Blantyre: Kachere CLAIM, 2002.

British sex equality- such a contrast to the down trodden African woman.³⁵

Gaitskell documents the experience of another educated woman missionary, Jane Waterston who qualified as a medical doctor in Britain in 1879 and set off for Livingstonia Mission. She however resigned after six months partly because of the sexist attitudes of younger male missionaries who were used to women teachers only and failed to handle "a strong minded slightly older female doctor."³⁶ Robert Laws wanted Waterston to run a girls' school:

I was judged fit to teach Anatomy in London. I am thought fit for the Alphabet here... I refuse utterly to give up what I learnt thoroughly and know [.] to do work (teaching the alphabet and looking after girls demoralised by idleness and bad ways before I came) which a girl at a much lower salary could do.³⁷

It remains to be seen whether the realization that missionary women were sometimes as down trodden as their African counterparts might have opened new avenues for exploring the sisterhood of the oppressed in a colonial setting.

Unlike the UMCA, Livingstonia and Blantyre missionaries who had direct ties to Britain, the Dutch missionaries came primarily from South Africa. Consequently, their beliefs and practices varied to a considerable degree from those of other missions. In particular, the cultural context of being an Afrikaner woman is important to this discussion because most of the missionary women in the DRCM came from that setting:

³⁵ Sinclair, *Salt and Light*, p. 207.

³⁶ Deborah Gaitskell, "Women Health and the Development of Medical Missions: Some South African Reflections," in Katharina Hallencreutz (ed), *Gender, Poverty and Church Involvement*, Uppsala: Uppsala University Electronic Publishing Centre, 2005.

³⁷ Waterston to Stewart, 14 February, 1880 cited in Gaitskell, "Women Health and the Development of Medical Missions," p. 66.

The Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902) was without doubt the most influential event in the lives [of] Afrikaner women of the early twentieth century... A few decades after the war, the Afrikaner woman became known as '*volksmoeder*' (mother of the nation)³⁸

Being Afrikaner woman entailed "homeliness, motherhood, educating children and subservience to men."³⁹ Afrikaner women have used the *volksmoeder* image to "fight back against their marginalization and claim their identity as strong, dynamic women, but unfortunately it could also be used to inhibit and control them."⁴⁰ The question is to what extent then did the ideal of *volksmoeder* influence the type of motherhood that missionary women promoted in *Kwa Amai*?

In addition, the DRCM had a long history of involving women missionaries and wives of missionaries in its activities:

An increasing number of single missionary women were coming out as teachers and nurses (later doctors), but the backbone of mission staff continued to be the unpaid mission wives who maintained traditional marital role of homemaker and all round support. They taught reading, Bible Knowledge and handicrafts to African women and coached church choirs. They learned the vernacular and did all their work through it... the DRCM maintained, through missionary families, an example for Christian living- and simultaneously nearly doubled their staff with wives.⁴¹

This means that at almost each and every mission station of the DRCM there were missionary women either as wives or women missionaries who interacted with African women. It is also significant that missionary women in the DRCM quickly learned local languages,

³⁸ Bianca Botha, "Telling Her Story: Reconstructing a Historiography of Mrs. Alice Brink- Afrikaner Woman in Mission," MTh, Stellenbosch University, 2017, p. 9.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 37.

⁴⁰ Ibid, p. 37

⁴¹ Parsons, "Scots and Afrikaners," p. 27.

primarily Chinyanja/Chichewa. This made it easier for them to communicate and connect with local women. Moreover, *Kwa Amai* in *Mthenga*, the medium that carried mothercraft messages and ideas was published in the vernacular. As the discussion below demonstrates, both missionary women and literate African women contributed to the page and read it because language was not a barrier. It follows therefore that *Mthenga* in general and *Kwa Amai* in particular was not the preserve of the missionaries that created them.

Mothercraft: The Labour of Missionary Women

The inspiration for *Kwa Amai* came from South Africa where many programmes aimed at teaching women how to be mothers in the period before and after the First World War were established. Of particular relevance to this discussion is the Mothercraft League, initially known by isiZulu name *InblanganoYab'Ondblayo*. Branches were established in Natal and Transvaal between 1912 and 1914 and targeted young black women. *InblanganoYab'Ondblayo* was founded by missionary women of the American Board Mission as "...a league of South African women of all colours who wish to serve Christ by the promotion of Christian training in the home and Christian social services for Natives in towns."⁴² As Badassy aptly puts it however, "[t]he primary objective of the Mothercraft League was ultimately to protect white children, but the only way this could be achieved was by keeping a watchful eye over their servants under the guise of 'saving them.'"⁴³ Another mothercraft programme that influenced *Kwa Amai*, especially in the period after 1931 was Truby King's mothercraft. It was introduced in South Africa in 1923 and was largely directed at making white women into able mothers.⁴⁴ In fact,

⁴² Prinisha Badassy, "A Severed Umbilicus: Infanticide and the Concealment of Birth in Natal, 1860-1935," PhD, University of Kwazulu-Natal, 2011, p. 137.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ S.E. Duff, "Babies of Empire: Science, Nation and Truby King's Mothercraft in Early 20th Century South Africa," in S. Robinson and S. Sleight (eds), *Children*,

most programmes that were introduced in colonies instructed mothers in the physical care of their children. Women were therefore educated in various areas of child care such as feeding babies, bathing and clothing of infants, balanced diet, personal and household hygiene as well as physical exercise.⁴⁵

The mothercraft in *Mthenga*, at least in its early years, was different from the picture painted above because it was not so much concerned with the physical as with the spiritual well-being of children. Page after page writers emphasized the important role that God had given to women to be mothers. It was impressed upon the readers to appreciate that God depends on women to rear well behaved and God fearing children.⁴⁶ A Jewish proverb, "God couldn't be everywhere, so he created mothers to help him raise children," was used to show mothers that they were critical to God's plan for the care and salvation of children. One nameless writer claimed that God made childbirth painful and difficult because he wanted to create a special and strong bond between mothers and their children. This would enable women to sacrificially love them, as Jesus Christ loved the Church and died for it.⁴⁷ Fictional stories like the one below were used to drive home the point:

A story is told of a woman who went to a garden with her baby. The baby peacefully slept under a tree while the woman worked. She heard her cry and realized that an eagle had snatched her to feed to its young ones that were in a tree in a deep and dangerous ravine. The woman did not think about her own safety. She threw herself into

Childhood and Youth in the British World, London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, p. 59.

⁴⁵ Anna Davina, "Imperialism and Motherhood," *History Workshop*, No. 5 (1978), pp. 9-65; Allman "Making Mothers: Missionaries, Medical Officers"; Nana Akua Amposah, "Colonizing the Womb: Women, Midwifery and the State in Colonial Ghana," PhD, University of Texas at Austin, 2011.

⁴⁶ KwaAmai, "Zakusunga Ana M'banja," *Mthenga*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1923.

⁴⁷ Kwa Amai, *Mthenga*, Vol. 16, No. 5, 1934.

the ravine. With bloody hands, face and feet she managed to save her child from death. Would the woman have done the same, had her child been in the clutch of Satan?⁴⁸

Women were therefore called upon to make sure that their children did not fall into sin. In this regard, they were expected to show tough love by punishing their children when they misbehaved by using foul language or telling lies. Another story was used to illustrate how this could be accomplished:

There was a certain woman whose child was vulgar and obscene. His mother called him aside and told him that he was rotten inside and that is why obscene words periodically came out of his mouth. She then proceeded to wash his mouth with a soapy cloth. The boy cried uncontrollably but the woman was persistent. She then kindly spoke to him about giving his life to Jesus Christ so that he could be cleansed. The boy changed his ways.⁴⁹

From these and other examples, it is clear that missionary women used mothercraft to make African women agents that converted their children into Christians. Other routes of conversion such as attending Church services and Sunday school were inadequate to fulfil this mission. Consequently, it was necessary to catch children while still young and in the care of their mothers. It was also understood that African women, without any instruction, were capable of catering for the physical needs of their children. A wife of a migrant labourer whose husband was in Southern Rhodesia attested to this.⁵⁰ She claimed that women in her position were powerless on issues dealing with the spiritual well-being of their children. Physically, women ably provided food and clothing for their children. They also bathed their

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Kwa Amai, "Udindo Wache Wa Mkazi Kwa Ana Ache," *Nthenga*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1924.

⁵⁰ Kwa Amai, "Udindo wa Amai a Kristu Kulera Ana Atate awo Akapita Ulendo wa Ku Harare," *Mthenga*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1923.

children and gave them physical comfort when sick. However, some women found it difficult to pray for their children in the absence of their husbands. It is interesting that *Kwa Amai* ignored all the other problems African women faced as a result of labour migration, such as desertion, shortage of labour and marital instability but stressed women's failure to pray for their children as the ultimate problem that such women faced.

Mothercraft also influenced the education of girls and young unmarried women to ensure that proper Christian mothers were created. This responsibility was entrusted into the hands of female missionaries and wives of missionaries. Dona Raats gave a background to this work in the first issue of *Mthenga* for 1928. She reminded readers that when the DRCM began its work in the country, missionaries quickly grasped the importance of female education. "The missionaries realized that if they wanted to uplift the people, then they should focus on girls who were considered the mainstay of family life."⁵¹ However, the instruction of girls into mothers could not be undertaken by just anyone. It was important for the girls to be under the supervision of missionary women. Raats reported in 1928 that from humble beginnings in 1895 when the first *Kumadona* boarding school was established under the supervision of Dona Martha Murray at Mvera, the Mission had eight such schools.⁵²

In these schools, girls lived with missionary women for three years, after which Dona W.H. Murray examined them and gave them a certificate of attendance. *Kumadona* girls underwent instruction in three major areas: Bible Knowledge and evangelization; reading and writing and home management (agriculture, cookery, soap making, oil extraction, pottery, rope making, needle work etc.). According to Raats, *Kumadoma* graduates developed a close relationship with God through Bible reading and prayer. They made good Christian wives

⁵¹ Kwa Amai, *Mthenga*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 1928.

⁵² Ibid.

to their husbands and had stable families. Others become village and station school teachers. They taught Sunday school and undertook evangelism work more generally. Dona Raats then encouraged mothers and fathers to send their daughters to *Kumadona* schools.⁵³

Kumadona schools were a popular topic in many issues of *Mthenga*. Some of the topics covered included the responsibilities of women whose daughters were in school. According to one proud mother of a *Kumadona* student, mothers had an important responsibility of praying for their children and providing any physical help that might be required.⁵⁴ Furthermore, from time to time former graduates of the schools were reminded of their responsibilities towards their children, husbands, villages and God. In fact, missionary women regularly held reunions for *Kumadona* graduates. These events, too, were covered in *Mthenga*. The paper also carried testimonies of girls and women who had gone through *Kumadona* schools and benefited from them.⁵⁵

Colonial State Manipulation of African Motherhood in the DRCM

In the 1930s there was a shift in the conceptualization of Mothercraft and this was reflected in *Mthenga*. The earlier version had emphasized the spiritual aspect of childcare. Articles and letters reiterated how African women were capable of looking after the physical aspects of their babies and children but needed instruction in the spiritual ones. All that changed in 1932 when the writer of *Kwa Amai* in the September-October issue introduced the new thinking:

We have been aware for some time that this country needs to educate young women in the craft of raising healthy babies. Many

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Kwa Amai, "Ana Akazi Akumadona," *Mthenga*, Vol. 5, No. 3, 1923.

⁵⁵ Kwa Amai, "Masungidwe a Ana M'nyumba ya Madona," *Mthenga*, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1925.

babies are dying in their first year of life because women don't know how to handle them. For a long time we have wanted to give lessons on baby care in *Kumadona* school. However, we need actual babies for the lessons to be a success.⁵⁶

This was indeed a major departure from the mothercraft of the 1920s, which had portrayed African women as capable care-givers of the physical needs of their babies and children. What is more, the change did not entirely originate from the mission even though the writer of the article claimed that the missionary women in the DRCM had been aware for some time of the need for change in the conceptualization of mothercraft. If that was indeed the case, it was not reflected in *Mthenga* in the 1920s. It would seem that the colonial state in Nyasaland was at the centre of this move: "The government is keen that mothercraft should be taught to girls."⁵⁷ This agenda was not confined to Nyasaland. It was a continent-wide project. Allman has explained that the 1930s mothercraft movement in African colonies originated in Geneva where in 1931 representatives of European government, church and business met to discuss the welfare of African children:

The conference participants blamed social diseases, poverty, 'native mid-wives and their anti-hygienic practices,' mothers' 'carelessness' and 'irrational feeding' of infants, superstition and finally, 'lack of sufficient medical aid' for infant mortality rates which exceeded seventy percent in some areas.⁵⁸

The conference adopted the cheapest solution to the problem, that is, the call to instruct African women in the proper care of their children.⁵⁹ According to Allman, the conference avoided linking the problem of infant mortality to other pertinent factors such as the

⁵⁶ Kwa Amai, *Mthenga*, Vol. 14, No. 5, 1932.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Allman, "Making Mothers," p. 23.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

effects of migrant labour, cash-cropping and taxation. Coming to Nyasaland, the colonial state operated in an environment where due to its "financial and political link with Britain and, by its own lack of resources"⁶⁰ was ill equipped to provide social services to its subjects. Consequently, the provision of education in mothercraft to African women as was the case with other social services was pushed to Christian missionaries like the DRCM.

Consequently, in response to the state's demands, leaders of the DRCM decided to merge the government promoted mothercraft programme with the syllabus in *Kumadona* schools. At the time, Dona Raats was on holiday in South Africa and was asked to undergo training in Truby King's mothercraft in Cape Town. The new programme was implemented upon Raats' arrival in three centres where orphan babies were available: Nkhoma, Mlanda and Kasungu.⁶¹ The new programme was offered only to senior girls in their third and last year of study. The girls lived with the baby and took care of all its needs with the supervision of missionary women. However, the development of independence in the baby was emphasized. Consequently, the baby was given milk only four times during the day and at night it did not take any at all. In addition, there was a special box in which the baby played so that it could not be picked up anyhow. As a result, in order to facilitate the expansion of the programme to the remaining *Kumadona* schools, missionary women through *Kwa Amai*, prevailed upon readers to identify orphans. In addition, as part of the new programme other subjects were added to the syllabus. These included: the importance of toilets, clean air and

⁶⁰ Megan Vaughan, "Which Family? Problems in the Reconstruction of the Family as an Economic and Cultural Unit," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 24, 1983, 275-83, at p. 280.

⁶¹ Kwa Amai, *Mthenga*, Vol. 14, No. 5, 1932.

water, disease prevention, first aid, and personal and household hygiene.⁶²

The women's page in *Mthenga* for the early 1930s is rather silent on the reasons why the Mission went along with the state's agenda, especially in light of the fact that at times the Mission undermined and challenged the state's position on issues dealing with Africans. Christian marriage was one issue on which the DRCM in particular and other Christian missionaries in general, defended the rights of their African members. In their quest to convert Africans, missionaries promoted an ideal Christian marriage. However, they encountered resistance from many sides including the colonial state. The problem dated back to the 1902 Marriage Ordinance whose provisions on bigamy, adultery, divorce and inheritance were harsh and incompatible with certain matrilineal customs. Missions therefore lobbied the state to amend the Ordinance. The result was the Christian Native Marriage Ordinance of 1912, which answered concerns raised by the missions, but created other problems as well:

The Nyasaland Native Marriage Registration Ordinance is a nullity in that it has no legal consequences whatsoever... This means that the Church marriage of native Christians is celebrated according to the rites of the Church and is binding between the contracting parties and the Church...it would be many years before natives could be bound by such a contract, and indeed the central government in spite of the pressure by missions, ought not to permit them to be bound by legal consequences in marriage.⁶³

Contrary to this, the DRCM believed that Africans were capable of being bound by legal consequences in marriage. For example, in 1923, Beatrice claimed divorce from her husband, Daniel on the

⁶² Kwa Amai, "Zofunika ndi Boma pa Maphunziro a Ana Akazi," *Mthenga*, Vol. 14, No. 5, 1932.

⁶³ MNA, PCC/1/26/1 Native Christian Marriage, District Commissioner, Ntcheu – Provincial Commissioner, 18.8.1941.

grounds of adultery and desertion before the District Magistrate at Lilongwe. Both were members of the DRCM at Nkhoma. The court found that a case had been made out against Daniel and he was remanded pending the decision of the Attorney General. The Mission, through Rev. L.J. Murray provided all the information to show that both parties were aware of the significance of the marriage contract.⁶⁴ In fact, there were several exchanges of letters and documents between March and November 1923 involving the Magistrate, Rev. Murray and the Acting Attorney General on the matter. Although the DRCM defended the rights of Beatrice and Daniel, the Attorney General was not convinced that Beatrice should seek court redress:

The woman may, if she thinks it worthwhile, file a petition of the High Court Blantyre, for the divorce on the ground of adultery. It is presumed that her object is to free herself from penalties if she indulges in some fresh form of missionary 'marriage'⁶⁵

Missionary Women: Friends of African Women?

Analyzing the language and content of the seminal issue of *Kwa Amai*, one gets the impression that the writer wanted to present missionary women and African women as a unified category. Women were making a pact to write and read their own words on their page. This established a collective ownership of the page. The use of a common language, *Chinyanja*, which both groups used in their daily lives, enhanced the solidarity. Moreover, the page was simply signed *Mai* (Mother/Woman), a common term for any woman. Perhaps what is more telling is the way in which the writer crafted mothercraft and the central role women were expected to play in their children's

⁶⁴ MNA, L2/15/1 Magistrate Lilongwe, 1919-1925, The Christian Native Marriage Ordinance, 1912, Statements by Female Native, Male Native and Licensed Minister's Certificate.

⁶⁵ MNA, L2/15/1 Magistrate Lilongwe, 1919-1925, Attorney General – Magistrate, Lilongwe, 12.11.201923.

spiritual well-being to cement the oneness. Mothers, regardless of their racial and cultural backgrounds were united by Christianity in a battle to save their children from spiritual death. Did this sisterhood or friendship develop further and operate at all times?

If there is one issue that divided missionary women from their African ‘sisters’ it is missionaries’ stand on local rituals associated with female initiation (*chinamwali*), child birth and death. There were many articles, opinions and letters that were written which disparaged African women’s ways of handling issues associated with their bodies. M. Ferreira, a missionary woman from Mlanda, reminded readers in 1927 that the Mission had declared that Christians should not be taking part in female initiations and other rituals. She expressed disappointment that many Christians still allowed their children to participate in the evil practices. She emphasized that it was the duty of Christian mothers to guide their daughters through such important milestones. According to Ferreira, girls went through a lot of misery in the process. Some were immersed in very cold water or beaten up. She then invited African women who had denounced such practices to come out and share their experiences in the following issue of *Mthenga*.⁶⁶ Three women from Nkhoma, Salima and Kongwe shared how their children did not die despite the fact that no rituals or taboos were undertaken in their homes.⁶⁷

The issue of women’s participation in cultural practices dominated discussions in the 1920s. It also took centre stage at the conference for missions operating in Nyasaland that took place in Blantyre in 1926. Responding to frustrations which missionary women like Mamie Martin had aired at the 1924 conference, organizers allowed female participants to meet separately and discuss issues the affected

⁶⁶ Kwa Amai, *Mthenga*, Vol. 9, No. 4, 1927.

⁶⁷ Kwa Amai, *Mthenga*, Vol. 9, No. 6, 1927.

them as women.⁶⁸ Some African women also attended the conference. In their deliberations, delegates noted that many Christians, especially women still followed cultural practices that the Church had already denounced. The women resolved to punish any woman who went against Church ruling on the matter.⁶⁹

A change in attitude was only demonstrated in *Kwa Amai* of 1934 following Dona Raats and Dona Brand's visit to Mabel Shaw's Mbereshi School in Northern Rhodesia. Shaw used her writing during the interwar period to impress upon her readers in Britain and elsewhere to consider the possibility of incorporating elements of African culture into Christianity. She also supported the participation of African women in Church leadership. On their visit, the women were so impressed to learn from Shaw how she had managed to accommodate female initiation into her brand of Christianity. The two Donas actually witnessed a Christianized version of female initiation where Shaw presided over the proceedings as *namkungwi* (counsellor). In their report on the trip to Mbereshi, the two missionaries raised the possibility of having a similar ceremony for girls in the Church. They asked parents to send in their views on the subject.

Unfortunately, termites destroyed some issues of *Mthenga* at the National Archives of Malawi where they are housed. Furthermore, efforts to locate subsequent issues of *Mthenga* at other locations, especially at Nkhoma CCAP Synod headquarters proved futile. As a result, the researcher was unable to follow this development to its logical conclusion using contents of the women's page in *Mthenga*. In other words, the researcher failed to establish whether the parents sent in their views. However, other studies have established that the DRCM eventually introduced a Christianized version of female initiation, locally known as *Chilangizo*, which is still practiced to this day

⁶⁸ See footnote 34.

⁶⁹ Kwa Amai, *Mthenga*, Vol. 8, No. 6, 1926.

in all its churches as it was in the 1930s. One of the major factors given for this development is that Christian mothers persisted in sending their daughters to the 'pagan' female initiation.⁷⁰ For example, A.G.O. Hodgson, District resident at Dowa remarked that "cases have occurred of girls living in Mission boarding schools by the consent of one parent being persuaded to undergo the ceremony [*chinamwali*] by the other."⁷¹ In order to curb this tendency, the Mission developed its own rite of passage devoid of the objectionable aspects of the original *Chinamwali*. Notions of Christian respectability were also added to the ritual. It is possible however that the example set by Mabel Shaw at Mbereshi also greatly influenced the stand which the Mission adopted on the matter.

Missionary women also displayed paternalistic tendencies towards their African friends in *Kwa Ama*. This was particularly evident in the issues of September and October 1925. In that year, America-based Ghanaian educationist and missionary, Dr James Emman Kwegyir Aggrey visited the DRCM. He made the following comments when bidding farewell to the missionaries: "Friends, I beg you to have mercy on my sisters, the women of this country. You are providing good education to men. Please, don't forget to promote women's education as well." Instead of supporting Dr Aggrey's sentiments, the writer of the page defended the DRCM by outlining what the Mission was already doing in that field. Unfortunately, the writer focused on the type of education (Bible reading, writing, rudimentary Arithmetic, personal hygiene, mothercraft, soap making and pottery) that was given to wives of African teachers so that they could become

⁷⁰ See for instance, Isabel A. Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 1997; Hendrina Kachapila, "'Remarkable Adaptability': Gender, Identity and Social Change among the Chewa of Central Malawi, 1870-1945," PhD, Dalhousie University, 2002.

⁷¹ MNA, NS1/23/6, A.G.O. Hodgson, District Resident Dowa - Provincial Commissioner, Central Province, 15.4.201927.

good Christian wives. By unequivocally defending the Mission's women's education programme, an opportunity was lost on the part of the missionary women to empathize with and uplift their African sisters in the field of education. There was indeed a need to improve the quality of education that was offered to African girls so that they could be employable in areas beyond the confines of their homes and mission schools. Contrary to this stand however, other submissions in *Kwa Amai* showed that missionary women were committed to the provision of quality education for girls. In this regard, *Mthenga* carried articles that urged mothers to encourage their daughters to access educational opportunities available to boys so that they could work as teachers and nurses. In most cases, however, such articles were derived from reports of meetings that missionary women from the DRCM held jointly with women from other Christian missionary parties.⁷²

On the other hand, *Kwa Amai* carried stories that celebrated courageous and accomplished African women. Notable examples include Namlangeni, wife of Mputa, the second Maseko Ngoni leader. She was remembered as a warrior and Mother of the Nation.⁷³ Furthermore, Namagagula, wife of Inkosi Chikuse, the fourth Maseko Ngoni leader, was praised for using her position in the royal household to protect many guilty Ngoni women and men facing death at the hands of her militaristic husband.⁷⁴ Ordinary women were also celebrated in *Kwa Amai*. For example, Alesi, a teacher from Mlanda, was described as a cheerful and hard-working woman who enjoyed her job even though she suffered poor health throughout her

⁷² KwaAmai, *Mthenga*, Vol. 8, No. 6, 1926.

⁷³ KwaAmai, "Mai Wina Waulemu," *Mthenga*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 1931. For more information on Namlangeni see K.M. Phiri, "Some Notes and Thoughts on Women of Substance in the History of Malawi," A Paper presented to the Gender Studies Seminar, Chancellor College, University of Malawi, Zomba, 21 August 2003.

⁷⁴ KwaAmai, "Mai Wina Waulemu," *Mthenga*, Vol. 13, No. 5, 1931.

career.⁷⁵ Women of strong faith who saw visions of heaven and God were also featured in *Mthenga*.

Conclusion

There is indeed shortage of literature on the experiences of missionary wives and female missionaries in the Malawian context as McCracken has rightly observed. This has been blamed on among others, the absence of primary written documents on which to base a thorough analysis of female experiences of missionary activity. Consequently, the broader narrative of the development of Christianity has largely been understood from a male perspective because the experiences of male missionaries have been adequately captured in Church records. Christian newspapers such as *Mthenga* are therefore a valuable source in addressing this lacuna. Their reports have the great advantage of being close in time to the events covered. Moreover, numerous studies have demonstrated that missionary women did a lot of writing in the form of diaries and letters. This chapter has demonstrated that they also documented their experiences in newspapers. The study has noted that *Mthenga* was not the only Christian newspaper in Nyasaland. Other missions such as Blantyre, Livingstonia and UMCA published newspapers of their own. Our understanding of the female experiences of missionary activity, in particular and the development of Christianity in general would richly benefit from a serious treatment of Christian newspapers as historical sources.

Recent scholarship has highlighted the role of religion in forging friendship and shared Christian womanhood between missionary women and their colonized counterparts. This chapter has demonstrated that missionary women in the DRCM, made attempts to build solidarity with African women. They used a Christian version of mothercraft to speak to the commonalities among women stemming

⁷⁵ Ibid.

from their position as mothers concerned with the spiritual well-being of their children. Their attempts were overtaken by developments in the interwar period. Specifically, the colonial state, through the DRCM championed a different kind of mothercraft that cast African women as culprits in the problem of high mortality among African children. This exaggerated differences between the two groups as missionary women came up with paternalistic programmes to educate African women in the physical care of their children. Other developments, especially Mabel Shaw's brand of Christianity which celebrated elements of African culture, enabled the women in the DRCM to accommodate each other on issues related to African culture. The development of feminism also made it possible for missionary women to demand certain concessions from their male counterparts. This provided them with space to meet in women only groups and discuss issues that affected them as women.

"They were Kept Outside but their Interest was Inside": an Examination of the Role of African Women in the Construction of Social Identities in Colonial Malawi

Dorothy Tembo

Introduction

The impact of mission work and colonialism on the construction of identities in Malawi cannot be overemphasized. Historically, research investigating African identities has focused on the effects of mission schools, native associations and indirect rule on African communities. Consequently, the research, to date, has tended to focus on the negotiations between African men and European men rather than women since African men dominated the mission schools and native associations.¹ As such, there is little understanding of women agentive roles in the construction of social identities during the colonial era.

Nevertheless, recent developments on African agency have led to a renewed interest in women agentive roles in the construction of identities during the colonial era.² A number of scholars have, for example, taken interest to examine the continual impact of colonial

¹ See Leroy Vail and Landeg White, "Tribalism in the Political History of Malawi," in Leroy Vail (ed), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, London: James Currey, 1989; Bonaventure Mkandawire, "Ethnicity, Language, and Cultural Violence: Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda's Malawi, 1964-1994," *The Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 1, 2010, pp. 23-42; Owen J.M. Kalinga, "Colonial Rule, Missionaries, and Ethnicity in the North Nyasa District, 1891-1938," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 1985, pp. 57-72.

² See Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musisi (eds), *Women in African Colonial Histories*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002.

binarism on the (mis)representation of women vis-à-vis their impact on the writing of colonial histories and the construction of identities.³ Several historians indicate that colonial documents depict African men as "honourable, courageous and active in the public domain while women were guardians of morality and tradition in the private sphere."⁴ Moreover, colonial sources suggest that "masculinity was 'the foundation of the nation and society' while women were 'the guardians of the traditional order'."⁵ This, inadvertently, consigns women to the private sphere of folktales, children's stories and gossip and furthers the belief that the public sphere and urban areas are more important than the private sphere and traditional societies.⁶ Eventually, literacy, influence and power became associated with the male gender.⁷

Besides, the popular "dominator and dominated" motif does not fully capture the colonial experiences of African women because women were subjected to double domination.⁸ For example, in most

³ See Jan Bender Shetler, "Gendering the History of Social Memory in the Mara Region, Tanzania, as an Antidote to 'Tribal' History," in *Gendering Ethnicity in African Women's Lives*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015, pp. 31–57; Heidi Gengenbach, "'What My Heart Wanted': Gendered Stories of Early Encounters in Southern Mozambique," in Jean Allman, Susan Geiger, and Nakanyike Musisi (eds), *Women in African Colonial Histories*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2002; Jan Bender Shetler, "Women's Alternative Practices of Ethnicity in Africa Gendering Ethnicity in African Women's Lives," in *Gendering Ethnicity in African Women's Lives*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015, pp. 3–30.

⁴ Nickie Charles and Helen Hintjens, "Gender, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity: Women's 'Places'," in Nickie Charles and Helen Hintjens (eds), *Gender, Ethnicity and Political Ideologies*, New York: Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003, p. 2.

⁵ Charles and Hintjens, "Gender, Ethnicity and Cultural Identity," p. 2.

⁶ Shetler, "Women's Alternative Practices of Ethnicity," p. 3.

⁷ See Shetler, "Women's Alternative Practices of Ethnicity," pp. 3–16.

⁸ Ritu Tyagi, "Understanding Postcolonial Feminism in Relation with Postcolonial and Feminist Theories," *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 2014, p. 45.

African countries, including Malawi, Europeans, i.e. missionaries and government officials, at times worked together with African men in implementing policies that were discriminatory to women thereby causing men and women to have different experiences concerning European colonialism. Against this background, it is necessary to deconstruct colonial texts and the histories they seek to represent and to regard such histories with skepticism to avoid simplistic generalizations that homogenize colonial experiences of African men and women.

This chapter deconstructs historical narratives about women's colonial experiences in Malawi. This is achieved by delineating European influences from African traditional beliefs about family and womanhood, thereby showing an interplay between European and African beliefs on the position of women in the society. The chapter demarginalizes colonial experiences of women and generates an understanding of ways through which women negotiated their identities in a changing socio-political environment.

The chapter uses archival data pertaining to native associations, missionaries, government official and European traders. This is supplemented by secondary sources dealing with the construction of gender identities during the colonial era in Malawi and Africa more generally. The lack of primary sources on gender and colonialism in African studies makes it even more relevant and necessary to compare women's colonial experiences across Africa.

Literature Review

While some research has been carried out on the construction of gender identities in colonial Malawi, there have been few investigations on the influence of women on colonial government policies. The lack of recognition of women's agentive roles on government policies stems from the fact that previous studies have failed to problematize the discrepancy in European's accounts of African women as oppressed people, and simultaneously, their efforts at

training African women for domesticity. For example, in her analysis of gender roles in the Nkhoma Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian, Isabel Apawo Phiri explains that the power and influence of Chewa women diminished during the colonial era because of mission Christianity.⁹ Traditionally, Chewa women "had total control of the rain shrines as mediums."¹⁰ Further, Phiri explains that the "same women had political leadership."¹¹ However, during the colonial era missionaries instituted and supported patriarchal structures which led to a transformation of gender roles within the church.¹² Partly, this was achieved by attacking customs and traditions which had supported women leadership roles, e.g., rainmaking traditions which were thought to be inconsistent with Christian beliefs.¹³ Through this, missionaries abolished the political influence of women and encouraged them to live a life of submission to men.

According to Phiri, the "subordination of women was thought to be divinely sanctioned [and] the creation story in Genesis was seen as the Biblical foundation for the subordination of women."¹⁴ However, this does not mean that before the arrival of the missionaries women had total power in Chewa society. On the contrary, Phiri acknowledges that women had a limited amount of power in the traditional Chewa society given that women were subjected to oppressive cultural practices such as early marriages, bride wealth and wife

⁹ See Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy: Religious Experience of Chewa Women in Central Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1997; Hendrina Kachapila, "The Revival of 'Nyau' and Changing Gender Relations in Early Colonial Central Malawi," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 36, No. 3/4, 2006, pp. 319–45.

¹⁰ Isabel Apawo Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, p. 23.

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 23.

¹² *Ibid*, chapter 3.

¹³ Judith Van Allen, "'Sitting on a Man': Colonialism and the Lost Political Institutions of Igbo Women," *Canadian Journal of African Studies/La Revue Canadienne Des Études Africaines*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1972, p. 165.

¹⁴ Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, p. 55.

inheritance. Nevertheless, the ambiguity between these theses, i.e., African women as religious and political leaders and African women as oppressed members of the society, is not addressed in Phiri's book. Consequently, it is difficult to understand the widespread exploitation of women against the background of women political and religious leaders.

In another study, Hendrina Kachapila demonstrates that the revival of Nyau, which had started as a form of cultural resistance to mission work, contributed to the domination of women in the Chewa matrilineal society.¹⁵ Kachapila explains that Nyau morphed from a traditional dance performed at funerals to a cultural institution opposing mission work, especially schools. Most importantly, she explains that Chewa men used Nyau to renegotiate their position in the matrilineal society and as a result, established their power and dominance over women.¹⁶

In addition to mission work, Kachapila observes that the colonial economy also contributed to the changing gender relations in the Chewa society. She explains that men had a lot of economic opportunities such as working in estates run by European settlers and could migrate to Northern and Southern Rhodesia for paid work. However, "Chewa women were not as free as men were to pursue economic activities during the colonial era."¹⁷ These and many other factors resulted in the subjugation of Chewa women. Together, Kachapila and Phiri demonstrate that mission work and colonialism led to the domination of women through the introduction of patriarchal structures which were alien in the Chewa matrilineal culture.

A good analysis and discussion on the subject of women agency was presented by John McCracken in "Class, Violence and Gender in

¹⁵ See Kachapila, "The Revival of 'Nyau.'"

¹⁶ Kachapila, "The Revival of 'Nyau,'" p. 321.

¹⁷ Kachapila, "The Revival of 'Nyau,'" p. 331.

Early Colonial Malawi: The Curious Case of Elizabeth Pithie."¹⁸ In this review of women missionaries, McCracken shows that there were social disparities between European men and European women in mission churches and as a result, he questions whether mission and colonial documents offer sufficient evidence for reconstructing gender relations during colonialism. He argues that there is a lack of representation of women in the colonial archives. He further believes that this absence is due to the fact that some of these women challenged social norms of their day. According to McCracken, "when women fail to conform to the conventional stereotypes, they are all too often sidelined and ignored."¹⁹ Such was the case with Elizabeth Pithie, wife to Alexander Hetherwick, the head of the Blantyre Mission, and Jane Waterston, a medical doctor at Livingstonia. McCracken explains that both Pithie and Waterston joined the mission as unmarried women and, as such, they were marginalized by their male colleagues to the extent that their respective contributions to mission practices were not recognized.

Notwithstanding this, Waterston and Pithie created new roles for themselves.²⁰ Waterston, for example, resigned from Livingstonia due to numerous disagreements she had with Robert Laws and established herself at Cape Town while Pithie campaigned for racial equality within Blantyre Mission. In short, McCracken explains that Pithie challenged racial and social boundaries more radically, both in her involvement with Clement Scott in the attempt to create a unified, interracial Christian community at Blantyre and in her ascent to and interpretation of the position of missionary wife. In marrying Hetherwick she achieved the goal of middle-class respectability which had hitherto always eluded her. Yet in abandoning her husband and

¹⁸ See John McCracken, "Class, Violence and Gender in Early Colonial Malawi: The Curious Case of Elizabeth Pithie," *The Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 64, No. 2, 2011, pp. 1–16.

¹⁹ McCracken, "Class, Violence and Gender," p. 1.

²⁰ McCracken, "Class, Violence and Gender," p. 13.

returning permanently to Scotland she demonstrated a readiness to put her own interests and those of her children first. Her life story, virtually extinguished for more than half a century, is remarkable in itself.²¹

McCracken's article raises an important methodological issue; how do you write the history of women when the colonial texts are silent about women agency? One way is to explore the lives of the women in the context of their marriages. It is in this light that McCracken discusses the life of Pithie against the background of the men to whom she was married.

It is also important to consider that McCracken writes about European women and not African women. Most certainly, writing colonial histories about African women will bring its own set of challenges. If European women were marginalized, one would only imagine the condition of African women in an era characterized by Eurocentric beliefs. The key question, then, is how do you measure the agency of people who were marginalized and lived on the fringes of the colonial society without promoting colonial biases? That being the case, it is essential to define what we mean by the concept of "agency."

Agency is here being used to refer to "the capacity of human beings to shape the circumstances in which they live." In other words, agency refers to actions that are reflective such that participants are conscious of the cultural or political consequences of their actions. Most importantly, Emirbayer and Mische postulate that agency includes daily routines/practices of everyday life because such actions are taken to ensure the "continuity of social knowledge over time."²² Regarding the colonial era, this conceptualization of agency suggests that the inter-generation transmission of culture, customs and

²¹ McCracken, "Class, Violence and Gender," p. 13.

²² Mustafa Emirbayer and Ann Mische, "What Is Agency?" *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 103, No. 4, 1998, p. 977.

traditions depicts agency of the participants although such activities are usually considered routine and mundane aspects of life.

McCracken seems to have used this theoretical understanding of agency in his assessment of Pithie and Waterston such that Waterston's decision to leave Livingstonia for Cape Town and Pithie's decision to remain in Scotland are considered acts of self-determination, hence depicting agency. Like McCracken, I analyze colonial texts which portray African women as oppressed people to show their agentive roles in the colonial era. This is achieved by assessing the transformation of customs and traditions concerning African marriages to show that African women contributed to cultural debates which eventually influenced government policies. In line with Phiri and Kachapila, I acknowledge that mission work and colonialism contributed to the domination of African women by men. However, I go further to show that African women used colonial institutions and structures to construct their identities and to push for social progress.

Missionaries' Representation of African Women

From the late nineteenth century, most missionaries and their wives believed that African women were oppressed.²³ At the turn of the century, their opinions towards women remained the same.²⁴

²³ Margaret M'Callum, "Letters to the Sub-Committee (Printed)." No. 77, August 29, 1898, ACC 7548 69D NLS, Livingstonia.

²⁴ Alexander Hetherwick, "The Nyasaland United Missionary Conference Report of the Meeting Held at the Livingstonia Missionary Institution," Educational Work, 17 October 1900, MS 3088, University of Edinburgh, p. 13; Alexander Gillon MacAlpine, Malawi Missionary Papers and Linguistic Studies; Hetherwick; Miss Stewart, "The Nyasaland United Missionary Conference Report of the Meeting Held at the Livingstonia Missionary Institution. Women's Work." October 19, 1900, ACC 7548 71D NLS, Livingstonia; Mrs Murray, "The Nyasaland United Missionary Conference. Report of the Second General Missionary Conference Held at Mvera. Women's Work," August 3, 1910, ACC 7548 71D NLS, Livingstonia.

Consequently, women's education was designed with the explicit aim of delivering them from oppressive African traditions.²⁵ Progress for women, therefore, entailed embracing Christianity and abandoning the putative 'pagan' and 'primitive' African culture to become homemakers and help-mates to their Christian husbands.²⁶

Despite this, missionaries were of the view that their work would free women from oppressive African traditions. Miss Walker of Livingstonia reported at the Consultative Board of Federated Missions (1949) that African women were able to perceive the social inequalities prevalent in African communities.²⁷ According to Walker, one African woman stood up from the congregation at a church meeting and uttered the following words:

My friends, do you see it? Do you realize what is happening? We are people. In our own village, where are we women, when plans are being made or discussed for the good of our people? It is men who are inside the kraal, we women are cut out. Now here in the church we are brought

²⁵ Mrs Miller, "The Importance of Women in Native Life," *The Aurora*, December 1904, KS 1167A Stellenbosch; Mrs Miller, "The Nyasaland United Missionary Conference. Report of the Second General Missionary Conference Held at the Church of Scotland Mission Blantyre. Evangelization of the Heathen - Women's Influence in Native Life," October 21, 1904, ACC 7548 71D NLS, Livingstonia; "The Nyasaland United Missionary Conference Report of the Meeting Held at the Livingstonia Missionary Institution. Women's Work," October 19, 1900, ACC 7548 71D NLS.

²⁶ Mrs Dewar, "The Nyasaland United Missionary Conference Report of the Meeting Held at the Livingstonia Missionary Institution, Women's Work," October 19, 1900, ACC 7548 71D NLS, Livingstonia; Miss Beck, "The Nyasaland United Missionary Conference. Report of the Second General Missionary Conference Held at Mvera. Women's Work," August 3, 1910, ACC 7548 71D NLS; E.D Colville, "Native Peoples of Nyasaland Village Life and Agriculture," (n.d.), KS 1167B Stellenbosch.

²⁷ E.G. Walker, "African Women against their Traditional Background," in Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *Christianity in Malawi: A Source Book*, Gweru: Mambo-Kachere, 1996, pp. 98–99; cf. Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, p. 1.

inside. We have been given a place and work to do in the Kingdom of God. Here in the church we are people.²⁸

Miss Walker explained that Ngoni men met in the kraal to make decisions about their kingdoms and although no African woman was invited, they gathered at a safe distance to peep through and see what was happening inside the kraal. Walker uses this experience to conclude that the African women "were kept outside but their interest was inside."²⁹

Walker indicates that, unlike traditional African society, the church encouraged women participation in decision making and suggests that African women used the church as a platform for criticizing their culture. All the same, it must be pointed out missionaries often made such statements to justify their work and their presence in Africa. In this case, it is more likely that Walker was trying to show that Livingstonia mission work was a catalyst for progress.

In reality, missionaries replaced the traditional patriarchal system with a European model of patriarchy. To explain this point, I refer to a discussion on the Nyasaland Women's Work Conference. The conference proposed that mission education for girls should be tailored towards training them to be "worthy wives and wise mothers" and "to be the companions and help-mates of their Christian husbands."³⁰ Thus, girls' education "developed as a response to male interests and perceived male needs."³¹ Women were trained for homelife and to remain in the traditional society with no possibility of migrating to urban areas which represented progress. Thus, through these education policies, missionaries sought to carve out an identity for African women as homemakers and isolated from events in the public sphere. This is in contrast to the active roles

²⁸ Walker, "African Women against their Traditional Background," p. 99.

²⁹ Walker, "African Women against their Traditional Background," p. 99.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Fiona Leach, "African Girls, Nineteenth-century Mission Education and the Patriarchal Imperative," *Gender and Education*, Vol. 20, No. 4, 2008, p. 335.

women performed in pre-colonial Africa where they served as seers, prophets and priestesses etc.³²

Despite these limitations, mission sources shed light on some aspects of women agency. To understand women agentive roles, we need a more nuanced interpretation of the colonial and mission texts that capture experiences that seem to exist outside the dominant historical narratives. A critical examination of mission texts reveals that missionaries overlooked the fact that the church had more women converts than men. However, missionaries were unable to appreciate the significance of these numbers. Heidi Gengenbach's study on mission work in Mozambique, for example, reveals that women risked social persecution because they defied their husband's advice against joining the church.³³

The possibility of women in Malawi facing similar experiences cannot be ruled out. For instance, Donald Fraser is on record as saying that Ngoni chiefs instructed Robert Laws, Head of Livingstonia Mission, not to convert any of their wives because Christianity was against polygamy.³⁴ By extension, other men possibly detested mission work due to similar reasons, especially considering that throughout the colonial era the church was plagued with debates about polygamy vis-à-vis church membership.³⁵ Put differently, the fact that women joined the church in spite of these challenges suggests that they understood and exercised their power of choice. It is just that this aspect of women's lives is not analyzed by missionaries because of their preoccupation with arguments that African women were "slaves" simply seeking mission protection.

³² Phiri, *Women, Presbyterianism and Patriarchy*, p. 23.

³³ Gengenbach, "'What My Heart Wanted': Gendered Stories of Early Encounters in Southern Mozambique," p. 23.

³⁴ Donald Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People: Sixteen Years' Work among the Warlike Tribe of the Ngoni and the Senga and Tumbuka Peoples of Central Africa*, London: Seeley, Service & Co., 1914, p. 33.

³⁵ See "Polygamy," *The Aurora*, August 1, 1899, KS 1165 Stellenbosch.

Thus, it is not surprising that missionaries ignored the critical role played by women in shaping missions' vernacular language policies as exemplified by the experience of Livingstonia missionaries. From the start, that is, late nineteenth century, Livingstonia used Chinyanja as a medium of instruction for both preaching and teaching because most of their converts, women, were from Mang'anja and Nyanja ethnic groups. Later, Livingstonia changed to Chingoni when the mission was relocated from Cape Maclear to Khondowe. However, it soon became clear to the missionaries that Chingoni was not a viable alternative because few people spoke the language and a decision was subsequently made to use local vernaculars. What is of significance to the concerns of this chapter is that the majority of people who necessitated the shift from Chingoni and Chitumbuka were women and children belonging to Tumbuka and Tonga ethnic groups. By this time, some of the Tonga and Tumbuka women had been married to Ngoni men and were living in Ngoni areas with their families. Despite this, the women and children were not conversant with Chingoni hence the maintenance of their vernacular languages which they, in turn, transmitted to their children. In other words, the fact that Livingstonia "began to recognize the necessity of speaking Chitumbuka owing to a large number of people, especially the women, who did not understand Chingoni"³⁶ testifies to the agency of the African women during the colonial era.

As observed by Fraser, together with other Livingstonia missionaries;

in all the conversation of the rulers, and all the court cases, Chingoni alone was spoken. To this day many of the old Ngoni men and women profess to be unable either to speak or to understand the local language. On the other hand, the poor ignorant slave women could not learn this masterful language with its clicks, and dental linguals, and continued to speak among themselves and to their children the language of their own people, and as the children first learned to speak from the lips of their mothers, they

³⁶ Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People*, p. 195.

acquired the speech of central Africa rather than that of south of Zambesi, for the Ngoni were but a small portion of the nation.³⁷

Eventually, Chitumbuka replaced Chingoni and became the official language of the institution and, through mission support, Chitumbuka emerged as a northern regional identity which, later in the 1930s, played a critical role in the construction of Chewa and Tumbuka identities during the *lingua franca* debate.³⁸

The fact that Tumbuka and Tonga women together with their children partly influenced the adoption of Chitumbuka and Chitonga as a medium of teaching and preaching cannot be taken for granted. Ordinarily, in the Ngoni patrilineal system, foreign wives and children born of them were expected to identify with the Ngoni ethnic group and as a corollary, speak Chingoni as a mark of their identity. The determination of local women to maintain their linguistic identities under Ngoni rulership testifies to the agency that they were able to exercise. Thus, while it cannot be disputed that the Ngoni forced their culture on conquered groups to the extent of forcing them to wear Ngoni tribal marks,³⁹ and that some people claimed membership in the "mighty Ngoni" kingdom to access perceived prestigious Ngoni identity,⁴⁰ the fact that the local languages survived Ngoni conquest deserves a different explanation altogether. It demonstrates the conquered people's agency to maintain their cultural identities despite the pressure they received to conform to Ngoni culture, and

³⁷ Fraser, *Winning a Primitive People*, p. 188.

³⁸ See Vail and White, "Tribalism in the Political History of Malawi;" Mkandawire, "Ethnicity, Language, And Cultural Violence"; Edrinne Lora-Kayambazinthu, "Language Rights and the Role of Minority Languages in National Development in Malawi," *Current Issues in Language Planning* 4, No. 2, April 1, 2003, pp. 146–60.

³⁹ See Vail and White, "Tribalism in the Political History of Malawi," pp. 152ff.

⁴⁰ Pascal Kishindo, "'Flogging a Dead Cow?' The Revival of Malawian Chingoni," *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2002, p. 209.

the fact that local women are part of these conquered people is significant to the thesis of this chapter.

Native Associations, Colonial Government and African Women

For the most part, the thesis that African women were oppressed was based on missionaries' observations about African customs and traditions concerning the celebration of marriage. From both mission and government records, it is clear that African men used both their access to money and mission education to dominate women. As mission-educated men, they were permitted to form native associations which operated as quasi-political groups campaigning for the rights of Africans. However, they used these associations to legitimize their authority over women by reinterpreting marriage customs and traditions to serve their interests in the changing socio-political context. The desire of African men to dominate women is easily observable in the petitions the native associations submitted to the government under "seduction laws." The seduction laws were meant to regulate biracial relationships between African women and men of other races.

Records of the Mombera Native Association (*ca.* 1920) indicate that the association petitioned the government to prohibit biracial marriages which were occurring between African women and foreign men (Asian and European men). They argued that these marriages were responsible for the spread of venereal diseases and disorders.⁴¹ Government officials agreed with the native association that such unions were unacceptable. In his response to the concerns, the Chief Secretary explained that the government "discouraged cohabitation

⁴¹ "Minutes of the Mombera Native Association (1920?)" 1920, S1-210-20 MNA.

between foreigners and native women."⁴² Nevertheless, he emphasized that "the most effective remedy lies with the latter [women] who can avoid the evil consequences complained of by refusing unions with men not of their tribe or race."⁴³ The agreement between African men and government officials indicates that the former, due to their social status, were able to influence government policies concerning women. Further, this underlines the double domination African women were subjected to during the colonial era.⁴⁴ Europeans often considered women as legal minors and incapable of rationality. Thus, women were supposed to be socially dependent on their male relatives.⁴⁵ It can be argued that this ideological bias influenced the government to acknowledge the objections raised by the mission-educated men against biracial marriages.

Similarly, the Central Province Native Association (1928) condemned the "irregular relations between European and Asiatic men with native women."⁴⁶ Whereas the Mombera Native Association's argument was premised on public health concerns, the Central Province Association claimed that Asians and Europeans were exploiting African women because the "parents and guardians of the concerned women [were] uneducated [...while] European and

⁴² "Minutes of the Mombera Native Association (1920?)" ; "Copy for the Information of the Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province and the Resident, Mzimba" (December 19, 1922), S1-210-20 MNA.

⁴³ "Minutes of the Mombera Native Association (1920?)."

⁴⁴ Tyagi, "Understanding Postcolonial Feminism in Relation with Postcolonial and Feminist Theories," p. 45.

⁴⁵ Sean Redding, "Women and Gender Roles in Africa Since 1918: Gender as a Determinant of Status," in Teresa Meade and Merry Wiesner-Hanks (eds), *Blackwell Companions to History: A Companion to Gender History*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2004, p. 540; Stacey Hynd, "Deadlier than the Male? Women and the Death Penalty in Colonial Kenya and Nyasaland, c.1920-57," *Stichproben. Wiener Zeitschrift für kritische Afrikastudien*, No. 7 (2007), Nr. 7, 2007, p. 13.

⁴⁶ "Letter from the Central Province Association to Provincial Commissioner, Central Province." March 28, 1928, NC1/3/2 MNA.

Asiatic men were educated and semi-educated men."⁴⁷ As a result, they proposed that "in the true good of both races, that 'all connection between Natives and other men other than Native Africans be made a *criminal offense*'⁴⁸ for truly this [was] a damaging practice to both true race men and women."⁴⁹ The Association forwarded its grievances to the Provincial Commissioner who, in response, declined to criminalize biracial marriages. Instead, he suggested that parents and guardians should prevent women from entering into such marriages.⁵⁰ Like their Mombera Native Association counterparts, the Central Province Native Association leaders considered themselves guardians and protectors of local women on the account that African women were uneducated and could not make right decisions for themselves. Although the commissioner who turned down the Association's proposal was a European, it cannot be ruled out that the proposal itself played into the European perception of African women as no more than children incapable of rationality, hence the perceived need for male guardians to protect women from the above-stated "evils" through the maintenance of endogamous marriages.

Furthermore, it cannot be ruled out that socio-economic concerns influenced African men to exercise authority and control over marriages in general. In traditional society, the male guardians were the patriarchs of their respective communities and thus responsible for the continuity of the group and control of the means of production. As a result, the male guardians sought to control the sexual and childbearing capabilities of female members as a way of recruiting members into the group and of using children as a source of labour.⁵¹

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ "Letter from the Provincial Commissioner to Central Native Association" February 8, 1928, NC1/3/2 MNA.

⁵¹ Jeanne Koopman Henn, "The Material Basis of Sexism: A Mode of Production Analysis," in Sharon B. Stichter and Jane Parpart (eds), *Patriarchy*

It would have been challenging to maintain such control over mixed-race children who would be under the authority of their European and Asian fathers. Thus, "control over marriage arrangements [gave] patriarchs the means to control the labor of dependent males."⁵² In other words, marriage issues were linked to class, social status and economic well-being of the patriarchs.

The argument that economic issues influenced African men's attitudes and actions regarding interracial marriages between non-African men and African women is strengthened by the fact that records from the native associations show that there was economic competition between African men and Indians and some European traders. For instance, records from the West Nyasa Native Association, Mombera Native Association and the Central Province Native Association show that African men objected to the presence of Indians and Europeans in their areas.⁵³ More particularly, the West Nyasa Native Association asked for the deportation of Indians in May 1929, arguing that they were "ruining the country" and "emptying the country of its wealth."⁵⁴ This claim was premised on the theory that Indians were sending their money home, and thus leaving the country "impoverished." Moreover, it was claimed that the government and European settlers preferred to do business with Indians "to the disadvantage of the native."⁵⁵

Likewise, the Central Province Native Association agreed with the proposal that Indians should be deported from the country stating

and Class: African Women in the Home and the Workforce, Boulder: Westview Press, 1988, p. 38.

⁵² Ibid, p. 40.

⁵³ Most native association disapproved of the presence of Indians in the Protectorate and asked the government to deport them. Regarding European traders, the native associations objected only to the presence of Europeans who were operating shops in villages.

⁵⁴ "The West Nyasa Native Association," May 1, 1929, NC1/3/4 MNA.

⁵⁵ "The West Nyasa Native Association."

similar reasons.⁵⁶ With respect to Europeans, the native association asked the government to close shops which some European traders were operating in villages. They explained that "the retailed or village stores by Europeans even [were] not needed as they [stood] in the way of financial development of the natives."⁵⁷ Practically, the said "financial development" referred to the progress of African men as opposed to African women considering that the men occupied influential positions in the public sphere.

Martin Chanock in *Law, Custom and Social Order: The Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia* explains that African men established "a mode of control of women and marriage suited to new conditions but they sought to do this by an apparent strengthening of rural 'customs' and authority."⁵⁸ Simply put, African men redefined African traditions, in response to the changing socio-political context, to maintain dominance over African women. In connection with this, I argue that the economic competition was part of the "new conditions" which influenced the educated African men to prohibit biracial marriages and forced them to assert their traditional role as guardians and protectors of women.

Regardless of these attempts to dominate African women, the women maintained relations with Asian and European men. The Mombera Native Association letter of 1920 and the Central Native Association and West Nyasa Association petitions to government on biracial marriages written in 1928 and 1929 underscore this point. This nine year period signifies that the men's attempts to prohibit biracial marriages and unions did not stop women from engaging in such marriages and unions, and it cannot be ruled out that they

⁵⁶ "Central Province Association," November 24, 1928, NC1/3/2 MNA.

⁵⁷ "The West Nyasa Native Association."

⁵⁸ Martin Chanock, *Law, Custom and Social Order: The Colonial Experience in Malawi and Zambia*, African Studies Series, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985, p. 210.

continued to engage in bi-racial marriages as a way of pursuing their own economic aspirations and their social status needs.⁵⁹

The ensuing negotiations between native associations and government officials reflect African men's efforts to delimit the extent of European hegemony while the government's refusal to regulate biracial marriages shows that the colonial government did not intend to usurp customary law. However, what is more significant is the fact that, although African women are generally considered marginal members of the colonial society it can be argued that their resistance to male demands and domination influenced the political discourse which shaped colonial policies not only regarding African marriage but also the separation between European law and customary law.

The conflicts between European law and customary law are well illustrated in divorce cases. The cases below show that women preferred to take their divorce cases to Europeans rather than traditional marriage counsellors. However, the native associations were not pleased with this arrangement, arguing that it was against their traditions and cultural values. The native associations rightly argued against the use of courts in settling marital disputes considering that in pre-colonial Malawi and for most of the colonial era, "no marriage [was] regarded as real unless there [were] certain traditional sponsors on both sides"⁶⁰ "generally referred to as *ankhoswe*."⁶¹ According to T.D. Thomson, the *ankhoswe* were also responsible for settling marital disputes and divorce negotiations. Thus, the use of Europeans as

⁵⁹ Gengenbach explains that African women established relationships with Europeans to pursue their economic interest. She writes; "These depictions of African women actively courting contact with Europeans, and interpreting the visitors' presence to their advantage, merely hint at the gendered quality of early colonial encounters in this area." Gengenbach, "'What My Heart Wanted': Gendered Stories of Early Encounters in Southern Mozambique," p. 22.

⁶⁰ T.D. Thomson, "Notes on African Customs in Nyasaland," (nd), SOMA, p. 4.

⁶¹ Thomson, p. 4.

agents in settling marital disputes was a new development and a departure from tradition. Nevertheless, the colonial encounter resulted in a social transformation of African culture and customs such that it was not unusual for women to exercise their agency by seeking help from the courts. In other words, African women understood African men's effort to revert to "tradition" as covert patriarchal effort to keep women in their homes and to prevent them from engaging with colonial government institutions and structures.

Before the establishment of courts, Africans lodged their complaints viz. *milandu* with any European be it a trader, missionary and government official. According to Chanock, "in the early years white justice was held out as an ideal, and many flocked to take advantage of its offering."⁶² For example, in 1923 Frederick Moir of the African Lakes Company reported that "in the process of time the company was recognized as a potent influence in the land, and they brought all sorts of disputes for decision. Natives are inclined to be litigious, and '*milandu*' or palavers are very common."⁶³ In many of these cases, Frederick Moir and his wife sided with the women who brought up allegations against their husbands. This resulted in a lot of divorces because they judged the cases presented to them using European lenses. In general, most of the Europeans were "intent on liberating women from arranged marriages, and to that end they generally liberalized divorce laws, at least until women proved so willing to divorce that they often clogged colonial courts with cases relating to the dissolution of marriages."⁶⁴ Christian converts benefited from the European influence because they were encouraged to divorce their 'heathen' and sometimes polygamous husbands.

⁶² Chanock, *Law, Custom and Social Order*, p. 104.

⁶³ Frederick Lewis Maitland Moir, *After Livingstone: An African Trade Romance*, 1923, p. 50.

⁶⁴ Redding, "Women and Gender Roles in Africa since 1918: Gender as a Determinant of Status," p. 541.

The use of Europeans should not in any way suggest that Africans were blindly following Europeans. Rather, it was a well-calculated move adopted to escape the retributive justice of the traditional and customary law. In an undated manuscript, W. H. Murray explained that among the "achewa [sic] people who committed adultery were killed."⁶⁵ However, Europeans did not give the death penalty in marital cases which possibly encouraged women to seek help from government courts. While, on the one hand, the European perception of African women as creatures incapable of thought influenced the courts to leave the women unpunished in most cases, the women themselves used government courts because of the belief that Europeans were lenient compared to *ankhoswe* and family members; *ankhoswe* and family members tended to advise women to continue living with their husbands regardless of the nature of the problem(s) at hand.

Labour migrants were one of the groups most affected by the existing European court systems.⁶⁶ Literature shows that women could annul their marriages or could divorce their husbands when the latter traveled outside the country for work for periods as short as six months.⁶⁷ Furthermore, men complained that women were punished less in adultery cases. As might be expected, the educated African men did not like the departure from tradition and the leniency afforded to African women by the courts. In 1920 members of the Mombera Native Association asked the government to give equal "punishment to both offending parties so as not to encourage her [sic] with immoral activities."⁶⁸

The Mombera Native Association (in 1929) explained that

⁶⁵ W.H. Murray "Brief Notes on Chewa Custom," (n.d.), KS 1105 Stellenbosch.

⁶⁶ See Chanock, *Law, Custom and Social Order*.

⁶⁷ See Chanock, *Law, Custom and Social Order*.

⁶⁸ "Minutes of the Mombera Native Association (1920?)."

in olden days, especially in Zwangendaba's time, if man and woman were found guilty of adultery, they were both punished by death. In the time of the first District Commissioner at Mzimba, a guilty man had to pay compensation to the offended husband, and had to be imprisoned for 6 months, and the guilty woman had to be imprisoned for 3 months. The Association then, after some discussion came to the conclusion that if both man and woman made a mutual consent to do wrong, they must both pay to the offended husband, and be imprisoned the same term.⁶⁹

In response to these allegations, the District Commissioner explained that it has invariably been my practice to imprison the female offender and cause her to pay compensation when a criminal charge of adultery has been lodged against her by her husband bearing in mind when so imprisoning the erring wife that under no circumstances will she afterwards return to her husband.⁷⁰

The idea that the woman should never return to her husband is perhaps what the men were most worried about, and it could be the very reason why women resorted to the courts.

However, the District Commissioner's position is different from the one advocated by the Provincial Commissioner for the Northern Province. In a letter to the West Nyasa Native Association, the Provincial Commissioner indicated in 1925 that adultery was not a crime under English law.⁷¹ He instructed the West Nyasa Association that adultery cases should be tried under African cultural law and that both guilty parties should be punished. It is thus surprising that four years later a district commissioner from the same province indicated that adultery was a criminal offence. It is possible that these cases were dealt with on a case by case basis and that there was no blueprint for government officials to follow when examining divorce cases.

⁶⁹ "Mombera Native Association," July 2, 1929, NC1/3/4 MNA.

⁷⁰ "Observation on Minutes of Meeting of the Mombera Native Association Held on the 2nd and 3rd July, 1929," September 12, 1929, NC1/3/4 MNA.

⁷¹ "Letter from the Provincial Commissioner, Northern Province to the Secretary, West Nyasa Native Association, Chinteché." April 24, 1925, S1/2065/19 MNA.

Most certainly, this created opportunities for Africans, and women in particular, to exploit the system to their own advantage.

Levi Mumba, a graduate of Livingstonia Mission, decried the conduct of the magistrate in the administration of divorce cases. He stated that;

one is also surprised to see that in some marriage cases the men who stood surety at marriage time are ignored. Lack of sense of gravity on the part of magistrates is also revealed by asking questions which on the face of them are very silly, e.g., cases of adultery the woman is often asked which husband she prefers!!! This is a funny experience for any Bantu husband and creates a desire in him to do what he hesitated before, i.e., kill the adulterer if he can by any means possible. This encouragement of dissolution of marriages by magistrates has given the native woman a liking for this course when she wants to leave her husband... The truth ... is that there is altogether too much superciliousness on the part of the magistrates who think it a waste of their time to take much pain in investigation [sic] all native cases and the result is that there is general dissatisfaction all over the country with the way cases are heard.⁷²

The issue of customs and traditions features prominently in the complaint from Mumba. Most probably, the "surety" referred to the *ankhoswe*. Mumba's complaint demonstrates that the departure from the traditional norms and the use of European courts were contentious issues for most African men who felt victimized by the system. However, the arguments raised by Mumba and native associations reveal the traditional roles of African women and expectations placed upon them. The fact that African women were able to circumvent these norms suggests a sense of agency. Furthermore, the debate between native associations and the colonial government concerning women affairs indicate resistance to conform to such norms and underscores the point that African women, to a degree, were able to determine the course of their lives.

⁷² Levi Mumba "The Administration of Justice," Malawi National Archives, quoted in Chanock, *Law, Custom and Social Order*, p. 203.

Conclusion

This chapter sought to examine women agentive roles in the construction of social identities in colonial Malawi. The evidence provided above shows that we need a more nuanced interpretation of the colonial texts to understand the roles played by women in the construction of identities. By historicizing and problematizing colonial documents, this chapter demonstrates that African women chose which "traditions" to uphold while simultaneously engaging with Europeans on matters which African men considered a departure from their traditional roles as wives. It is through this dialogue with African men on what is "tradition" that we see their defiance of male demands and domination. Most importantly, the chapter shows that women were part of the cultural debates which influenced colonial policies.

The Contested Legacy of Malawi's Decolonization Process, 1944-1994

Paul Chiudza Banda
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Introduction

Following Owen Kalinga's 1996 publication, the historiography of Malawi's politics of decolonization has become more nuanced than ever before.¹ Kalinga's work was a corrective to an otherwise top-down story of decolonization which, while emphasizing the role of nationalist figures such as Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, Henry Chipembere, Kanyama Chiume, and others, missed out the contribution of the 'subalterns' to the protest movement in the country.² We now know how the peasants, women, and other groups helped to shape the politics of mass nationalism throughout the 1950s.³ Much clearer also is our knowledge of the nature of the anti-colonial movement. It was quite heterogeneous and brought together diverse groups with multiple interests. What remains far less clear, however, is how these interests, especially those of the common masses played out after independence. This omission is not surprising. Confined to the conceptualization of decolonization as the "transfer of political

¹ O.J.M. Kalinga, "Résistance, Politics of Protest, and Mass Nationalism in Colonial Malawi, 1950-1960: A Reconsideration," *Cahiers d'Études Africaines*, Vol. 36, No. 143, 1996, pp. 443-54

² See Robert I. Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: The Making of Malawi and Zambia 1873-1964*, S.L.: Harvard University Press, 1972; Philip Short, *Banda*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1974.

³ For instance, see A.F. Chiponda, "The Role of Women in the Nyasaland State of Emergency, 1959-1960," in Kings M. Phiri et al (eds), *Malawi in Crisis: The 1959/1960 Nyasaland State of Emergency and its Legacy*, Zomba: Kachere, 2012, pp. 110-127.

power," Kalinga's concern, including those of his admirers, never went beyond the decade of independence. Colin Baker came closer to analyzing the events immediately after independence. His work, whose theme was the "cabinet crisis" helped to perpetuate the old scholarly tradition by explicitly displaying the revolt as an elitist movement.⁴ It represented a rapture in the otherwise unified circle of the elites who drove the course of the nationalist movement. Baker's work, as that of Kalinga and others, did very little to discuss the experiences of the underclasses in the period after independence. In other words, Malawian historiography has over the years overlooked the role which the youth, women, peasants, and other marginalized groups have played in post-colonial Malawi. This omission is surprising because as early as the mid-1990s, African scholarship portraying decolonization beyond the transfer of power politics had already matured.⁵

This chapter presents yet another corrective to the elitist tradition. It responds to a scholarly call to write histories of decolonization in ways that transcend previous conceptualizations of the classical age of 1945-1960s, an historical period which McCracken covered extensively in his studies. It adopts Joel Migdal's state in society approach to demonstrate the significant role that the youth, women and workers played after independence and how their interaction with the country's leadership shaped the nation's outlook. State in society approach challenges the traditional ways of looking at state bureaucrats and politicians as separate enclaves, far removed from the society and pursuing their own goals in ways fitting the concerns of rational choice theorists. Instead, it pays attention to how the state interacts with the society and how such interaction shapes the social,

⁴ Colin Baker, *Revolt of the Ministers: The Malawi Cabinet Crisis, 1964-1965*, London/New York: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2001.

⁵ Bethwell A. Ogot and William Robert Ochieng, *Decolonisation & Independence in Kenya, 1940-93*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1995.

political and economic landscape of a country.⁶ In significant ways, the interaction between the state and the groups in question was first shaped through the decolonization movement before maturing in the post-independence era. We argue that the tide of decolonization created specific demands and expectations among those that participated in it. While the cabinet crisis represented the country's failure to reconcile the varied interests of the elites, the same was not true with those of ordinary people, notably, the youth, women and workers. Having seen the zeal with which the youth, women and trade unionists opposed the colonial regime, the climax of which was the late 1950s, the post-colonial leadership swiftly incorporated these groups into specific state projects and institutions with an explicit aim of meeting their interests, especially those relating to livelihood goals. In cases where the political leadership failed to meet such expectations, as was the case with the trade union movement, the state resorted to using repressive means which included outlawing the movement. Other than seeing the post-colonial socio-political landscape as representing the agency of the country's top leadership, we draw attention to how state policy was, to a certain extent, a response to the challenges these groups supposedly presented. Consequently, an accommodative approach to state policy emerged, and one in which politicians' concerns combined somewhat problematically with those of the groups in question, thereby creating a culture of patrimonialism that has survived into the 21st century. In the subsequent section, we briefly unpack the decolonization movement to expose the diverse interest groups that constituted it and how they related with each other. The rest of the discussion focuses on the

⁶ See Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 1-40; See also Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988, pp. xiii-xxi and 10-15.

ways the youth, women and workers interacted with state bureaucrats and politicians after independence.

Unmasking the Decolonization Movement

At the end of the "classic phase of decolonization," from 1945 to 1965, the fundamental questions scholars raised had to do with understanding the major forces that made European powers pull out of Africa and the point at which such decisions were made. Answers to such concerns lay either in the metropole or in the colonies. While disagreeing on the actual point when British policy moved towards real planning for decolonization, both John Flint and Robert Pearce sought to narrate the story of decolonization by emphasizing the colonizers' will to transfer power to the colonized peoples. Flint showed "how the British proposed, from London, to plan African evolution to self-government" more so because "the dynamics for change lay in Europe and not Africa."⁷ He maintained that the process predated the outbreak of the Second World War, and the policy formulation was not in reaction to international forces for change. Instead, it was an outcome of the re-organization of the colonial system, in which the British government sought the means and ways of strengthening the Empire and Britain's international influence. On his part, Pearce argued that the actual plans for decolonization only became clear after the Second World War, when the Labour government put in place measures to gradually hand over power to the educated African elites, especially those it deemed trustworthy. It was in part, due to that background of colonial planning for decolonization that when Harold Macmillan became Prime Minister in 1957, he embarked on accelerating the decolonization process.⁸

⁷ John Flint, "Planned Decolonisation and Its Failure in British Africa," *African Affairs*, Vol. 82, No. 328, 1983, pp. 389-411.

⁸ Robert Desmond Pearce, "The Colonial Office and Planned Decolonisation in Africa," *African Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 330, Jan, 1984, pp. 77-93.

Even though the metropolitan thesis matured in the 1980s, it was, in fact, a reaction to the nationalist narrative that emerged around the 1960s. That tradition portrayed decolonization of British Africa as an event primarily motivated by forces internal to Africa. Such forces manifested themselves in strikes and riots, armed movements, and others, mostly under the coordination of the educated African elites. The formation of political parties from the early 1940s finally entrenched politics of mass nationalism that later helped to unseat the British colonial governments. Works by Thomas Hodgkin, Jack Woddis, and Robert Rotberg, among others, celebrated the significant role African nationalist movements played in the fight against European colonial rule in Africa.⁹ While emphasizing the role both the elites and the masses played in nationalist politics, much emphasis was on the former.

The dawn of the "new imperial historiography" in the mid-1990s helped scholars to raise some new questions on how countries in British Africa achieved independence. Having decentered the metropole, scholars looked to other forces that might have well contributed to the decolonization process. As Cheikh Anta Babou has recently noted, the metropolitan thesis highlighted above isolated colonial or local policymakers from their subjects as though the former were working in a political vacuum and least affected by local and international politics.¹⁰ It is not surprising that such scholars as Babou, Niall Ferguson and John Darwin put emphasis on the well-documented themes of the Second World War and other international forces, and how these events marked a watershed in the politics

⁹ See Thomas Hodgkin, *Nationalism in Colonial Africa*, New-York: University Press, 1957; Jack Woddis, *Africa: The Roots of Revolt*, New York: Citadel Press, 1962; Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa*.

¹⁰ Cheikh Anta Mbacké Babou, "Decolonisation or National Liberation: Debating the End of British Colonial Rule in Africa," *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, Vol. 632, 2010, pp. 41–54; See also Frederick Cooper, *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

of decolonization. The war, for example, unleashed forces that destabilized the otherwise good political balance that had existed both in the colonies and in the metropole.¹¹ While acknowledging the significant roles of the African leaders and those of the metropolitan planners, these scholars saw the latter's decisions unfolding in the context of pressure from the United Nations Organization (UNO), the USA and the USSR (the two super powers involved in the Cold War). This addition, however, did little to expose the agency of the various groups that participated in the decolonization movement.

Disappointed with such metanarratives, other scholars, including Kalinga whose work we introduced above, emerged to debunk the myth of the undifferentiated nationalist movement. They demonstrate how the interests of different groups coalesced in the cause of decolonization. Kalinga for instance, suggested examining how the non-official masses and the elite worked together in shaping the outcome of the decolonization movement in colonial Malawi.¹² Elsewhere, Elizabeth Schmidt has shown how the rank and file membership of the Guinean RDA, including the youth, women and workers, influenced that country's decision to pull out of the Federation of West Africa in 1958.¹³ On his part, Glaser has demonstrated how South African youth helped to galvanize the nationalist movement there through students' and youth protests.¹⁴ Again, in

¹¹ See for instance, Niall Ferguson. *Empire: The Rise and Demise of the British World Order and the Lessons for Global Power*, New York: Basic Books, 2003; John Darwin, *The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970*, Cambridge: C.U.P., 2009.

¹² Kalinga, "Résistance, Politics of Protest," pp. 443–54.

¹³ Elizabeth Schmidt, *Cold War and Decolonisation in Guinea, 1946-1958*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2007.

¹⁴ Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi: The Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935-1976*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2000.

deconstructing what he considered as a metanarrative of decolonization, Cooper discussed how workers (both rural and urban) influenced the decolonization process in French and British Africa.¹⁵

It remains unclear however, how post-colonial African states met the interests of such groups after independence or the ways in which the groups in question influenced the operations of the post-colonial state. In their edited volume of 1995 cited above, Ogot and Ochieng attempt to address that oversight by demonstrating how the masses in Kenya fared socio-economically after independence, with the majority registering disappointments. In his later work, Cooper places on a single continuum the late colonial and early post-colonial periods.¹⁶ However, his nuanced analysis of the colonial era in which diverse interest groups influenced the outcome of the anti-colonial movement missed out in the post-colonial period. At best, post-independence political and socio-economic policies played out through the agency of the top political leadership of African states. One exception to this shortfall is the work by Jay Straker in Guinea which demonstrated the significant role the youth played in guiding Ahmed Sékou Touré's post-independence national revolution in Guinea. Touré regarded the Guinean youth as a significant component for entrenching his socialist revolutionary programme through sports and other education-related recreational and cultural activities.¹⁷

We argue that while useful, the existing debate on the legacies of the decolonization movement is necessarily elitist and does not adequately capture the interests of diverse groups of people who participated in the fight for independence. The ways in which such

¹⁵ Cooper, *Africa since 1940*.

¹⁶ Cooper, *Africa since 1940*.

¹⁷ One exception to this shortfall is the work by Jay Straker in Guinea which demonstrated the significant role the youth played in Guinean post-independence national revolution. See Jay Straker, *Youth, Nationalism, and the Guinean Revolution*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009, pp. 1-43.

groups as the youth, women and workers helped to shape and or influence the behaviour of post-colonial leadership and how the latter sought to meet their interests need probing.¹⁸ Equally needing understanding are the outcomes of that interaction. It is this story that the subsequent sections tell using archival sources. Aware of the roles many ordinary people played in the fight for independence, the post-colonial leadership designed specific projects to suit the interests of these groups.

The Youth: Roles and Experiences

Two main youth movements were associated with Malawi's decolonization process, namely the League of Malawi Youth (also known as the Youth League) and the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP). The Youth League was established in the late-1950s to help in the fight for independence. Known for party activism, its members were trained in all aspects of party affairs, ranging from political, social, and economic responsibilities.¹⁹ During the late colonial and post-colonial eras, they helped to maintain 'discipline,' sometimes using coercive measures. These included forcing people to give gifts to party leaders and coercing them to buy party membership cards. On their part, the Youth Leaguers were expected to obey the orders of the party elite unquestionably and doing anything contrary was regarded as insubordination.²⁰ From time-to-time, colonial authorities expressed worries concerning the threat the Youth Leaguers posed, and often monitored their activities as they did with other

¹⁸ Ajayi addressed the unfulfilled expectations of many Africans after independence. See J.F. Ade Ajayi, "Expectations of Independence," *Daedalus*, Vol. 111, No. 2, 1982, pp. 1-9.

¹⁹ "Role of Youth League," *The Times*, 1 June, 1961; See also *Malawi News*. 27 March, 1964. "The Duty of the League of Malawi Youth."

²⁰ "Youth Memo," *Malawi News* 21 January, 1961, prepared by Mr. Ngelesi Mwaungulu, the National Secretary of the League of Malawi Youth; See also Joey Power, *Political Culture and Nationalism in Malawi: Building Kwacha*, Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2010, pp. 143-144.

members of the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC). For instance, a December 1961 report of the Special Branch of the Nyasaland Police reported on the threat the youth posed in disturbing state operations.

Since October 31st, 1961, when the last paper on the League of Malawi Youth was issued, incidents, including cases of arson and intimidation, for which the LMY have been proved to be responsible, have occurred in the Karonga and Mzimba Districts [Northern Province] and in Visanza [Central Province].... The basic reason for these incidents is clearly illustrated by a speech made by Aliforce Kachapila, the District Organizing Secretary of the LMY at Visanza, the ringleader and organizer of the series of incidents which took place there in early December. "We [the] youth... [Kachapila narrated] do not care for anyone. We do not care for the stupid police, stupid ADC, stupid forest guards, stupid teachers, stupid church elders, and other Capricorns. If the people of SNA Ntondo do not respect the boys and girls of the Youth League, they will suffer."²¹

Our analysis of the late colonial development plans and programmes for Nyasaland indicates that the youth were marginalized or simply dwarfed under the umbrella term of 'natives' without any special recognition. That probably explains why they were easily enticed to join forces with the NAC in the fight for independence. For instance, while touting his own administration's development agenda at a symposium in London, Governor Sir Geoffrey Colby (1948-1956), clearly indicated that it was the infrastructural development that was at the centre of his development agenda.²² He mentioned such things as the road and railway network, the telecommunication system, an agricultural research centre, the master farmer

²¹ The British National Archive (TNA) CO 1015/2445: Malawi Congress Party: Nyasaland, 1960-1962: 'Secret Dispatch – The League of Malawi Youth, prepared by the Special Branch of the Nyasaland Police, Zomba, 29 December 1961.

²² Colin Baker, *Development Governor: A Biography of Sir Geoffrey Colby*, London; British Academic Press, 1994.

scheme targeting progressive farmers, and funding for primary education.²³ Most of the development schemes had very little to do with the welfare of the youth. Under the 1959-1963 Development Plan (of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland), the federal government argued that it did not have the resources with which to provide for the welfare of the natives; instead, its focus had been to create the best possible climate for economic expansion by the private sector, an object that left out the youth.²⁴

Similar objectives played out in the 1962-1965 Development Plan for Nyasaland. One of the areas where the colonial authorities could have prioritized pro-youth policies would have been in the education sector. In this area, the plan set aside an initial amount of £500,000 to build a university college. An additional £170,000 was set aside for scholarships in support of Nyasaland students' undergraduate studies outside the country. There was also a sum of £900,000 towards secondary education across the country, focusing on the construction of school blocks to increase student intake. A further £70,000 was set aside for constructing a technical training centre in Lilongwe.²⁵ While there was realization about the need to fund the education sector, it was clear about the particular type of youth the government intended to produce—the educated class or those who would later on take up jobs in the civil service. It was thus no wonder that the colonial authorities' oversight over the welfare of all the youth groups—rural or urban, educated or uneducated—created room for many of them to jump onto the bandwagon of the nationalist movement. The youth who did so, often joined the nationalists expecting to enjoy the fruits of independence once the colonial government was

²³ Sir Geoffrey Colby, K.C.M.G. "Recent Development in Nyasaland," *African Affairs*, 55, No. 221, 1956, pp. 273-282.

²⁴ Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, *Development Plan, 1959-1963*, 1959.

²⁵ Nyasaland Government, *Development Plan, 1962-1965*.

removed from office. And yet there were also others who were simply caught up in the struggle against colonial rule.

Not wanting to repeat the previous errors, the Banda regime established the MYP in 1963, an organization that mainly comprised of moderately educated Malawian youth. It was initially created to serve as a developmental arm of the youth movement. With time, however, it served as a paramilitary wing of the party often at the centre of the various politically-influenced atrocities. Nevertheless, as the subsequent sections will demonstrate, it contributed to the employment of thousands of Malawian youth who were otherwise left out in the formal employment sector.

The MYP was modelled after the youth movement of Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, and for a moment its leadership received their initial training in that country.²⁶ It emerged as a state-sponsored youth organization charged with the responsibility of providing training and discipline to the country's youth and was fully supported by the Young Pioneers Act of 1965.²⁷ Apart from the Ghanaian support, the Israeli Government also helped train members of the MYPs.²⁸ The target group included those youth who would not make it to the country's then only university, the University of Malawi. At the MCP annual convention of 1968, the delegates also approved the policy of establishing Young Pioneer Agricultural Settlement Schemes across

²⁶ The MYPs went for specialized training at the 'Kwame Nkrumah Institute at Winneba.' See *Malawi News*, July 19th, 1963. "Ngwazi introduces Young Pioneering;" Kwame Nkrumah, *Africa Must Unite*. 2nd edition, New York: International Publishers, 1972, pp. 130-131.

²⁷ Malawi Government, "The Young Pioneers Act of 1965," *Malawi Government Gazette Supplement*. March 19th, 1965.

²⁸ D.D. Phiri. *History of Malawi*, Vol. 2, Blantyre: Malawi: College Publishing Company Ltd, 2010, pp. 312-315.

the country, where the youth played key roles in agricultural production and development.²⁹

Dr. Banda's sentiments below provide the best possible explanations of the expectations of the country's youth and an illustration of the role that they played during the late colonial era. "About the women and youth of this country," he stated in direct reference to their roles in the fight for independence and beyond, "I am possessive."

I organized them (women and youth) [sic], I brought them to where they are now. We have a reputation in Africa, if not the whole world, of having a highly organized Party [MCP], highly organized women, highly organized youth. What is even more, we have a highly disciplined youth. Our youth do not run wild. They are not impudent, they are not cheeky, no. To allow youth to be impudent? Oh no, not here! You can have that in Europe, you can have that in America, but not here! Youth must be disciplined, obedient, loyal, hard working.... The Young Pioneers are not pampered by the Government, no, they are productive. They produce maize, tobacco...³⁰

We argue that in significant measure, the Banda regime emphasized on channeling the youth's energies towards development efforts or programmes for various reasons. Firstly, to reward them for the role they played during the decolonization process, and secondly, to silence or tame them into supporting the government of the day. As highlighted above, the danger of leaving the youth without a clear direction was that they would be vulnerable to radical political elements, either local or international. Williams, for instance, highlighted how members of the Youth League, as well as other party organs of the MCP, were given a chance to express their views on matters of state and party administration, through the MCP district

²⁹ MNA PAM 2,835: MCP Convention Resolutions, 1965-1975. See *MCP Annual Convention Resolutions*, Lilongwe, 1968.

³⁰ Speech by Dr Banda at the opening of the Trade Fair, Blantyre. 1.07.201978.

conferences. In these fora, delegates also elected candidates into various positions, some of which were occupied by the youth.³¹

Women: Independence Struggle and After

Scholarship on women's and gender affairs has advanced well, clearly demonstrating the gendered nature of the protest movement in Africa.³² In the context of Malawi, it was the Women's League (WL) that initially provided leadership to women's participation in the anti-colonial movement. Established in the mid-1950s, it initially benefited from the leadership of Vera Chirwa, Rose Chibambo, and Mrs Ntenda, among others. In 1959, the colonial state proscribed the NAC such that the establishment of the new party, the MCP, also saw the rebranding of the Women's League into the LMW. Mrs. Margaret Mlanga became the first chairperson of the LMW in 1960. At the time of its formation, LMW sought to, among other aims, fight for the freedom of the country's citizens through the abolition of the Central African Federation; campaign for the release of all political prisoners; and lastly, teach local women about their rights.³³ By 1961, the LMW registered a total of 551 branches across the country, 69 in the Northern province, 73 in the Central, and 249 in the Southern province.³⁴

During the late colonial era, members of the LMW were also nicknamed "the Amazon Army" mostly due to their courageous fight

³¹ T. David Williams, *Malawi: The Politics of Despair*, Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1978, pp. 234-235.

³² See Jean Allman et al, "Women in African Colonial Histories: An Introduction," in Jean Allman et al (eds) *Women in African Colonial Histories*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2002, pp. 1-4; See Elizabeth Schmidt, "Emancipate Your Husbands! Women and Nationalism in Guinea, 1953-1958," in Allman et al (eds), *Women in African Colonial Histories*, pp. 282-304.

³³ Vera Mlangazuwa Chirwa, *Fearless Fighter: An Autobiography*, London: Zed Books, 2007, pp. 44-45.

³⁴ Power, *Political Culture and Nationalism in Malawi*, pp. 145-147.

against the colonial authorities. The Amazon Army intervened to fight for the release of political prisoners and call on the authorities to accelerate the date for independence. In her memoirs, Vera Chirwa narrated how, during the time of the 1959/60 Emergency, members of the LMW would go to prisons to force the guards to release political prisoners. "I decided to organize the LMW around this issue and called the executive committee together for a meeting." Vera Chirwa went on, "we should campaign to get these people free. I think we should start to harass the guards. Let's make a camp outside the prison and swamp them with women visitors. From that day, groups of women from different branches of the LMW took turns to camp outside the prison. It really annoyed the prison authorities, but what could they do?"³⁵

Other than these notable figures in the names of Rose Chibambo, Vera Chirwa, and others, ordinary women too played significant roles in the fight for independence. In their separate works, Anne Chiponda and Hendrina Kachapila have demonstrated the instrumental roles ordinary women played in Malawi's nationalist movement. Chiponda's work shows how women in Nkhata-Bay, Nkhota-Kota (Visanza), Karonga and Blantyre Districts used direct protests or civil disobedience to challenge the colonial authorities. Some of the women were killed, others were deprived of basic amenities due to the absence of their male heads of the household.³⁶ On her part, Hendrina Kachapila used the example of Chiwalwali Village in Visanza, a sub-district of the then Kota-Kota District, to demonstrate the key role women played in the nationalist struggles. Unlike Vera Chirwa's story, Kachapila argued that much of the women's protests during the State of Emergency in Visanza were local and lacked any NAC or LMW support. Both women and men supported one Adiel Kachapila, an elder brother to Aliforce Kachapila and a youth leaguer who resisted any form of arrest even

³⁵ Chirwa, *Fearless Fighter*, p. 48.

³⁶ Chiponda, "The Role of Women," pp. 110-127.

under the "Operation Jambo,"— which the colonial authorities had instituted to pacify the area.³⁷

The stories narrated above suggest the extent to which different groups of women participated in the struggle for independence in Malawi. It remains unclear, however, the extent to which the national leadership met their varied interests after independence. For the most part, the available scholarly works suggest that women remained loyal to the nationalist cause, this time around fully supporting post-colonial leaders, often becoming accomplices in entrenching an authoritarian post-colonial regime. Wiseman Chirwa has demonstrated how women's popular political songs helped to drum up support for Dr. Banda and the leaders that came after him.³⁸

Chirwa could be right. After the attainment of independence in July 1964, Malawian women, both urban and rural, provided the Banda regime with unflinching support. It was often common to see women attend Banda's and indeed MCP's political rallies in large numbers. Through the traditional dances they performed, the women, clad in colourful clothing depicting Banda's image(s), also provided a significant chunk of entertainment at the rallies. That level of loyalty, however, should not be trivialized, nor should it be reduced to a symptom of blind submission. Behind its veil lay specific interests women had whose fulfillment by the national leadership put the two into reciprocal ties of rewards and loyalty. Banda, for one, rewarded some selected women for their participation in the decolonization struggle and their relentless support for his regime. Such rewards came in several forms, such as inclusion in Banda's foreign

³⁷ H. Kachapila-Mazizwa, "'Operation Jambo,'- Chiwaliwali Village and the 1959 State of Emergency," in Kings M. Phiri et al (eds), *Malawi in Crisis*, pp. 56-73.

³⁸ Wiseman Chijere Chirwa, "Dancing towards Dictatorship: Political Songs and Popular Culture in Malawi," *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 10, No. 1, 2001, pp. 1-27.

trips; or being awarded houses which Banda constructed for selected leaders of the LMW.

In the 1970s, Banda constructed thirty-one houses across the country mostly for the leadership of the LMW. During one of the house hand-over ceremonies in Kasungu District, Banda drew a link between his government's favours towards women and the latter's contribution towards the fight for independence. "But the point is this," he stated, "in the fight against [the Central African] Federation...it is true the whole country stood by me, but even more, the women." Banda justified his house construction project as a show of gratitude to those who gallantly fought against colonial rule. "[Through this project], I wanted at least some of the women to taste a new life."³⁹ The houses were mostly built for the leaders of the LMW, and Banda argued that the gesture was only symbolic. "This is how it should be," he stated, "to feel that these houses are not just for the four but represent my gratitude to all of them."⁴⁰

With time, what started as a vote of thanks towards women's participation in the decolonization process became a standard practice with several other party functionaries benefiting from it. In his closing remarks to the 1977 MCP convention, Banda called upon the state to provide a monthly wage to some selected leaders (Chairperson, Secretary, and Treasurer) of the LMW, the Youth League, and the party across all the districts of the country. "I have decided that from today onwards," he stated, "party leaders...will get a little something every month, starting with [leaders of the] Women's League."⁴¹ He went on instructing the District Commissioners to carry out the directive.

Throughout the 1960s and 1970s, Banda's approach towards women was selective. We argue that such a policy shifted in the early

³⁹ Dr Banda's speech, Kasungu Boma, 25.01.201978.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Banda's Speech at the MCP Convention, Lilongwe, 29.10.2019.

1980s when the government established the National Commission on Women in Development (NCWD) which operated under the Ministry of Community Services and the Office of President and Cabinet (OPC). Established in 1984, with the aim of promoting women's welfare in the country, the NCWD marked a departure from the previous personalized policy of promoting individual women as highlighted above. Matters of women welfare and development were translated into state policy and helped to consolidate Banda's commitment to reward women as chief supporters of his regime.⁴²

On their part, women played an instrumental role in redefining the state's policy agenda to their advantage. While in the early years of independence one sees an overly top-down level of reciprocity in which Banda was pulling shots, the early 1980s saw a shift in that relationship. We argue that the establishment of the Chitukuko Cha Amai m'Malawi (CCAM), an exclusively women's organization whose primary aim was to campaign for the development of women across the nation, represented that turning point. It marked the climax of the Banda-women relationship and revealed the underlying goals that women sought to be included in "development."⁴³

Formed in 1985 as a Non-Governmental Organization, the CCAM had the overall goal of addressing poverty among women, both rural and urban. Brody captures its mission better: "The CCAM's mission was to consolidate the role of women and to facilitate their full integration into various development activities, including active involvement in relief and charity work while placing particular emphasis on the women in the rural areas."⁴⁴ Among other things, it promoted micro-economic enterprises among women,

⁴² Paula Rae Brody, "The Story of CCAM, 1985-1993," H.K. Banda Archive, Box 18, Folder 14, Indiana University Library. Unpublished Draft.

⁴³ Our discussion of the CCAM is based on Paula Rae Brody, "The Story of CCAM, 1985-1993."

⁴⁴ Brody, "The Story of CCAM," p. 1.

while training them in business and agricultural skills. It also provided guidance on matters of family planning through its offices scattered across all the districts of the country.

It was members of the LMW that helped to establish the CCAM. These included Mama Cecilia Tamanda Kadzamira, who was also Banda's "Official Hostess." She eventually emerged as the National Advisor of the group. Other pioneering members included Mrs. Nellie Nseula (National Coordinator); and Mrs. Margret Kumwembe (Deputy National Coordinator). The CCAM embraced the primary interests that had for long directed women's actions—the need for development. The word "Chitukuko" in CCAM is a local Chichewa term which means "development." In this case, CCAM as an acronym translates into 'an organization for the development of (all) women in Malawi.' The organization, therefore, symbolized the climax of women's goal in the struggle for independence. What they mostly sought after was "development" such that their loyalty was far from being a mere spectre of dancing towards dictatorship, as observed above.⁴⁵

Both the CCAM and the LMW evolved as the most significant institutions the state used to promote women's welfare. The CCAM was integrated into the state's bureaucratic structure, operating under the OPC. It was the primary advisory body to NCWD while itself benefiting from the expertise of the state bureaucracy within the Ministry of Community Services. While operating under the OPC, it nevertheless retained its autonomy as a women-run organization. Moreover, apart from attracting funding from other non-state organizations, its programmes were mostly financially underwritten by state grants.⁴⁶ Whether it achieved its objectives or not, women appeared to have penetrated the very seat of government where they influenced state's policy on women's development through the CCAM, the

⁴⁵ See Chirwa, "Dancing towards Dictatorship," p. 13.

⁴⁶ Brody, "The Story of CCAM," p. 14.

NCWD, and the LMW. Although Chirwa argued that the CCAM was subjected to the MCP's paternalistic and political control,⁴⁷ what he did not appreciate was how the inclusion of the CCAM Secretariat under the OPC represented the influence the organization had relative to state policy on women's development. As a consequence, government bureaucracy was altered to accommodate a non-state organization. The fact that Banda allowed this mixture of state and non-state institutions showed the extent to which he was willing to accommodate women as his staunch supporters. While the state captured the CCAM, equally compromised was the state bureaucracy.

The Trade Union Movement

The historical development of the trade union movement in the country has not been extensively covered. Most of the historians of labour have laid emphasis on such themes as labour migration and child labour.⁴⁸ Moreover, since the state suppressed trade unions soon after independence, many scholars were reluctant to touch on an otherwise politically sensitive subject. The few works on the subject, notably those by Chipeta, Dzimbiri and Woods, provide us a window from which to analyze workers' interests.⁴⁹ It is clear,

⁴⁷ Chirwa, "Dancing towards Dictatorship," p. 13.

⁴⁸ See for instance, Wiseman Chijere Chirwa, "The Malawi Government and South African Labour Recruiters, 1974-92," *The Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 4, (1996), pp. 623-42. The only work somewhat fitting the theme of worker consciousness problematically was his "Child and Youth Labour on the Nyasaland Plantations, 1890-1953," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 3, 1993, pp. 662-680.

⁴⁹ Mapopa O.J. Chipeta, "Labour in Colonial Malawi: A Study of the Growth and Development of the Malawian Working Class, 1891-1961," PhD, History Department, Dalhousie University, Canada, October 1986, pp. 297-311; Lewis B. Dzimbiri. "Trade Union Rights in Malawi: Context, Past and Present," *International Union Rights*, Vol. 8, No. 3, Focus: Codes of Conduct, 2001, pp. 21-22; Tony Woods, "Bread with Freedom and Peace: Rail Workers in Malawi, 1954-1975," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 4, December 1992, pp. 727-738.

however, that worker consciousness in the country has a long history that goes back to the rise of the wage labour force, especially in the non-agricultural sector, during the Great Depression era, 1929-1939. Most labourers flocked from the rural to the urban areas to look for employment opportunities as conditions in the rural areas deteriorated. In the urban areas, the workers began to face various labour related and personal challenges, including low wages and generally poor working and living conditions. These included limited or lack of provisions for sick leave pay, lack of paid annual holidays, pensions, and gratuities, among other issues. There were also instances of racism, where access to jobs tended to favour European and Asian workers who monopolized the most skilled and artisanal jobs. Similar trends characterized the civil service jobs where most African workers occupied the junior positions. Such trends helped to unite local workers who hoped to create channels through which to voice out their concerns, some of which contributed to the crusade against British colonial rule.⁵⁰

In the 1940s, the colonial government made efforts to meet the demands of the workers. The outcome of that exercise saw first, the introduction of the minimum wage policy and second, the setting up of the minimum wages advisory board in 1946. Nevertheless, many of such regulations remained un-enforced. That was mostly due to the government's lack of capacity to enforce the minimum wages. Consequently, many employers continued to either underpay or ignore the implementation of the recommended working conditions.⁵¹ It was thus unsurprising that the 1940s witnessed a series of strikes which African labourers organized. Added to these were other forms of day-to-day labour resistance such as absenteeism.⁵² For instance, in 1948 alone, official government records indicated that

⁵⁰ Nyasaland Protectorate, *Annual Report of the Labour Branch*, year ending 31st December 1938; Chipeta, "Labour in Colonial Malawi," pp. 297-311;

⁵¹ *Ibid*, pp. 312-318.

⁵² Nyasaland Annual Labour Report, year ending 31st December, 1940.

about 70 labourers went on strike on 1st January of that year at Cholo; several hundred artisans went on strike at Blantyre on 3rd and 13th August; while a further 100 workers struck on 1st October, at a Tea Factory in Mulanje District. The primary causes of the strikes included issues such as disagreements on methods of payment, dissatisfaction with their pay, and demands for an increase in weekend overtime payment.⁵³

Early efforts at creating trade unions begun in the mid-1920s mostly through the establishment of the Nyasaland Native Civil Servants Association (NNCSA). Established between 1923 and 1924, the NNCSA was only open to clerical and skilled workers. That probably explains why it never became a broad-based workers' organization, and hence ceased to exist by the early 1930s. In the 1930s, there were attempts to re-organize such bodies. The formation of the Railways and Recreation Association (in Blantyre) and the Lilongwe African Welfare Association were a good representation of such efforts. However, as with the NNCSA, both organizations were not open to unskilled workers, such that they tended to be welfare associations rather than broad-based trade unions that could worry state authorities. Furthermore, a generally negative attitude within the circles of employers, both public and private, often meant very little or no support for labour organization.⁵⁴

In such an environment, most of what became labour demands tended to be aired out in the so-called Native Associations that had begun to appear in the country since the second decade of the twentieth century. Some of these early Native Associations included the North Nyasa Native Association (established in 1912), the Mombera Native Association (1920), the West Nyasa Native Association

⁵³ Nyasaland Annual Labour Report, year ending 31st December, 1948.

⁵⁴ Chipeta, "Labour in Colonial Malawi," pp. 351-355.

(1920), and the Zomba Native Association (1923).⁵⁵ It was also from the Native Associations that the leading nationalist movement, NAC, was established, when workers such as Levi Ziliro Mumba, Charles Matinga, James Sangala, among others, got together to establish the party in 1944. Some of the leaders also straddled between serving the trade unions and sustaining their membership of the NAC. As such, there was a clear link between the organization of labour and the decolonization process, especially where the workers began to associate their class and racial struggles at work with the political struggles under colonial rule.⁵⁶

Concerned with the rise of labour demands and unrests, and their close association with radical nationalist agitation, the colonial state passed legislation to legalize and regulate the operations of trade unions in the aftermath of the Second World War. While labour-related legislation, such as those concerning the minimum wage were passed from the 1930s onwards, it was not until 1949 that the state legalized trade unions. The first two trade unions to apply for legal recognition, under the Trade Unions and Trade Disputes Ordinance of 1944, were the Association of Nyasaland African Motor Transport Workers, with its headquarters in Blantyre; and a parallel association of employers in the motor transport industry, called the Nyasaland Employers (Motor Transport and Traders) Association. By the end of 1949, there were also two other non-registered and 'unorganized' trade unions, one in the Public Works Department (at Zomba), and another in the tailoring community. All these were negotiating mostly for better working and living conditions.⁵⁷ By 1960, there were nine

⁵⁵ Phiri, *History of Malawi*, Vol. 2, pp. 43-53. MNA (Malawi National Archives) S1/1598/29: Chiradzulu Native Association, 1929-1935. MNA S1/3263/23: Blantyre Native Association, 1923-1937.

⁵⁶ Chipeta, "Labour in Colonial Malawi," pp. 358-359.

⁵⁷ Nyasaland Annual Labour Report, year ending 31st December 1949.

registered employee-led trade unions and six employers' associations in the country.⁵⁸

While Joey Power and Frederick Cooper have argued against over-emphasizing the role that trade unions and labour movements in general played in political activism and the radicalization of nationalism, we argue that Malawi's case shows the need to reconsider their political roles.⁵⁹ The concerns of the labour movements and the NAC, as McCracken has also demonstrated, often overlapped.⁶⁰ It is impossible to separate the labour movements and the NAC, as the activities of the two were mutually inclusive. While most leaders of the labour movements ended up joining the NAC, the NAC also from time-to-time often combined the grievances of workers with its demands for independence. For instance, in his 1953 dispatch to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Governor Geoffrey Colby reported that at a highly-charged NAC Easter Sunday meeting held in Blantyre—also coincidentally aired on BBC Radio—the leadership of the Congress, among other things, agreed to put across some

⁵⁸ The former included: The Transport and Allied Workers Union; Nyasaland Railways Asian Union; Commercial and General Workers Union; National Union of Plantation and Agricultural Workers; National Railways African Workers Union; Local Government Employees Union; among others. The latter included the Nyasaland Employers Association; Nyasaland Motor Traders Association; and Nyasaland Master Sawyers Association. See Nyasaland Annual Labour Report, year ending 31st December 1960.

⁵⁹ Power, *Political Culture and Nationalism in Malawi*, pp. 88-92. Joey Power argued that the workers had their own realistic demands, such that not every labour struggle was linked to political activism, and that the NAC just capitalized on the workers' demands and grievances for its own ends. A similar argument is advanced in Cooper, *Decolonisation and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa*, 1996.

⁶⁰ John McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1859-1966*, Suffolk, UK: James Currey, 2012, pp. 294-296. There were instances where some teachers and other workers' organizations used to contact the leadership of the NAC, to implore the NAC leaders to help them raise their demands for better wages and working conditions with their employers.

labour-related demands as they protested the establishment of the Central African Federation. Some of the demands prohibited Africans on private estates from paying rent in cash or work to the landlord as a form of rental payment. National cessation of work in the country; withdrawal of farm and estate labour; stoppage of labour recruitment for Southern and Northern Rhodesia, and the withdrawal of Nyasaland workers from the two Rhodesias, ranked among some of the demands.⁶¹

Such calls by the NAC leadership were not in any way beyond the primary objectives of the party, one of which was to "record all grievances and demands of the Africans, which [came] to its notice and to seek constitutional means in submitting the same to [the] Government for redress."⁶² The party considered itself as a champion of better working and living conditions for African workers.⁶³ The relationship that existed between the party and union leadership was, however, not always cordial. There were cases where, even before independence, Dr. Banda and the MCP would openly disagree and dismiss from the party some of the union leaders who flouted or questioned its principles and policies. For instance, in June 1962, a bitter dispute emerged between the party and two of the most militant trade unions in the country, namely the Transport and Allied Workers Union, and the Commercial and General Workers Union. The leaders of the unions, Suzgo Msiska and Chakufwa Chihana, respectively, advocated nationalization and communal ownership of industries, which was contrary to the aims of the MCP. As a deliberate measure to deter others from challenging the party leadership, both Msiska and Chihana were suspended from the party and subjected to denunciation in the print media. From the early 1960s onwards, it became trendy to absorb some of the union membership

⁶¹ TNA. DO (Dominion Office) 35/6851. Confidential Dispatch from Governor Geoffrey Colby, to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 8th April 1953.

⁶² TNA. CO 1035/137: Nyasaland African Congress: Aims and Objectives.

⁶³ TNA. CO 1035/137: Nyasaland African Congress: Labour.

into the civil service or the party hierarchy as a way of silencing them.⁶⁴

Due to the unpredictable relationship and the suspicions that existed between the MCP and the unions after independence, the Banda regime devised means of weakening the unions. What infuriated Dr. Banda was the links which some of the union leaders had with the global spread of Communism. By the early 1960s, most of the country's unions had reportedly affiliated to the All African Trade Union Federation (AATAU), which had strong links with similar bodies in Eastern Europe. For instance, Suzgo Msiska was reported to have flown to Moscow, in early May 1964 to attend a Workers International Conference there.⁶⁵ Chakufwa Chihana was also allegedly spotted facilitating the distribution of communist propaganda literature in some urban areas of the country in early 1964.⁶⁶

It was, therefore, unsurprising, as Lewis Dzimbiri observed, that following independence in July 1964 the Banda regime retained the colonial legal framework which gave significant powers to the Registrar of Trade Unions to control the registration and operations of the unions.⁶⁷ The Banda regime also organized heavy scrutiny and surveillance over trade unions through the members of the MCP. The MCP leadership was interested in ensuring that dissent from the trade unions and similar elements from the civil society did not jeopardize state policies on political stability, national integration, and economic development. The MCP also bulldozed the compulsory affiliation of workers to the only legalized umbrella trade union, the Trade Union Congress of Malawi (TUCM), which meant that party operatives closely monitored all union activities. Some 'loyal' union leaders were also given lucrative government posts, including some who became

⁶⁴ Short, *Banda*, pp. 156-157.

⁶⁵ TNA. DO 183/137: Political Intelligence Report, Nyasaland, May 1964.

⁶⁶ TNA. DO 183/137: Political Intelligence Report, Nyasaland, January 1964.

⁶⁷ Dzimbiri, "Trade Union Rights in Malawi," pp. 21-22.

diplomats, mayors, and top politicians. Between 1968 and 1994, the Government also deliberately left the position of Registrar of Trade Unions vacant, which by implication meant that the state could not legally sanction any other trade unions. Furthermore, the Government's hostility towards the extension of the Bill of Rights, especially freedoms of association and speech, between 1966 and the early 1990s, meant that union activities were by implication banned.⁶⁸

The September 1964 "Cabinet Crisis" could well have encouraged the hostility of the state towards worker consciousness. While well determined to undermine the 'rebel' cabinet ministers, Banda also saw trade unions and their leadership as breeding grounds for dissent, especially as there were close ties between the union leaders and the fired cabinet ministers. It was thus no wonder that most of the leading unionists of the independence era, such as Chakufwa Chihana, were also forced to go into exile, where they sought refuge from Banda's authoritarian state. At the end of 1964, the Government had also deregistered five of the nineteen trade unions formed before independence. Other unions that survived the 'purge' were subsequently disbanded, including the Commercial Workers Union (banned in 1972), and the Teachers Union of Malawi (1976). The unions that were spared were effectively powerless to effect any formidable opposition.⁶⁹

While the labour demands of the unions were central in the fight for independence, the post-colonial state regarded such unionization and

⁶⁸ Ibid. While the 1964 Constitution extended the Bill of Rights to the country's citizens, two years later in 1966, the Banda regime had removed the provision in the Constitution. See *The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi*, 1964 and 1966.

⁶⁹ Lewis B. Dzimbiri. "The State and Labour Control in Malawi: Continuities and Discontinuities between One-party and Multiparty Systems," *Africa Development*, Vol. XXX, No. 4, 2005, pp. 53-85, especially pp. 61-64. See also *Trade Unions and the Struggle for Quality Public Services in Malawi*, Public Services International (PSI): Southern Africa, 2004, pp. 20-21.

radical labour demands as a distraction to the nation-building project. Trade Union leadership was regarded as a threat to the attainment of nationalist goals. Unlike the youth and women whose interests the state somewhat addressed, the story of workers presented a sharp contrast, as the state did not accommodate trade unions in the post-colonial political and economic dispensation.

Conclusion

This chapter aimed at discussing the implications of the decolonization movement for independent Malawi. It has analyzed the interaction between the state on the one hand, and the youth, women, and workers on the other, and how this played out from the late 1950s to the first four decades of independence. During the late colonialism, it was the decolonization movement that defined that interaction, when African nationalists championed that cause by relying on the groups in question. Within that political context, a culture of expectations was created, with each group that participated in the decolonization process looking to the future to achieve their interests.

We have argued that in many ways, the political and economic policies the state pursued after independence in 1964, at least those relating to the youth, women and trade unionists, were dictated by the degree to which those in authority sought to meet the interests of these groups. As a consequence, state policy on the youth and women was characterized by an accommodative approach, especially one in which politicians' interests combined problematically with those of the groups under consideration. The interaction that emerged locked the two groups into a patron-client relationship that has survived into the 21st century. Where such a relationship did not work, as was evident with trade unions, contestations emerged, with the former resorting to repression as a means of silencing dissent. For the most part, that repressive culture helped to define the nature of the state throughout the post-independence period. In that way, we have

demonstrated how, other than influencing the nature of decolonization politics, many ordinary people helped to shape the country's post-colonial political and economic trajectory. Our analysis suggests that we can better understand the nature of the post-colonial political and socio-economic history by placing on a single continuum the developments of late colonialism and those of the early period of independence. Such an exercise requires a state in society approach, and one that takes into consideration how diverse interest groups that participated in the anti-colonial movement interacted with state authorities before and after independence.

Christianity and Nationalism in Karonga Hills: The Tale of Two Brothers during the Late Colonial Period 1954-1960

Augustine Chingwala Musopole

Introduction: Two Brothers

This chapter seeks to critically examine the contrasting life experiences of two brothers, namely, the Rev. Yoram Ronald Musopole (1915-1994), and Jacob (Jekapu) Katoba Flax Musopole (1919-1987) in Karonga Hills, now Chitipa District, between 1954 and 1960. This period marks the time when Rev. Musopole was Minister in-charge of the Bulambya congregation that covered the jurisdictions of Chiefs Nyondo and Kameme.¹ It also marks the time when Katoba Musopole returned from South Africa and became involved in local politics, to the extent that he was dubbed "General Flax" by the media at the height of the State of Emergency in 1959.

Both Yoram Musopole and Katoba Musopole were grandchildren of Mwachipeta Mkwaliima Musopole. He was popularly known as Mkwaliima on account of having married into the Mwenemisuku royal family and given the task of being the Chief's spear bearer, that is, chief security officer. Mkwaliima Musopole had six children. Four were boys, namely Chingwala, Ndonga, Kenani, and Zakaliya. Two were girls, namely, Twayobile and Jane. Katoba was the second born of Kenani Musopole and Lucy Nakayange, while Yoram Musopole was the first born of Zakaliya Musopole and Maggie Nakayange.² Yoram lost his mother at the age of six and went to live with the family of Ndonga who had also married within the royal family and

¹ The author is the son of Rev. Yoram Musopole and the chapter is partly based on his own childhood memories.

² Technically Yoram and Jacob were cousins but in their cultural context they were regarded as brothers and they regarded one another as such.

hence his wife was called *Nakamba*, that is, princess. Kenani and Ndonga lived not far from each other, but on opposite hills. Kenani, who was a teacher, persuaded Yoram to start schooling and monitored his progress. Therefore, the two brothers grew up together as they went to school together.

Their paths only parted after completing Standard Six at Mweni-londo School when they opted for different career paths. Yoram chose to become a teacher. He joined the Teacher Training College at Livingstonia in 1939 and graduated in 1941. He had married Tupokiwe Nasilumbu in 1937. Following years of teaching, Yoram returned to Livingstonia for theological training in 1947. He was ordained to the ministry of Word and Sacrament in 1951 and posted to Wenya congregation in Karonga District. Meanwhile Jacob chose to travel to South Africa for work and further education. After passing his Matriculation examinations, he enrolled at the University of Cape Town in 1953.

Contrasting Worldviews

From the time these two brothers parted ways, they also embraced two contrasting worldviews. Rev. Yoram Musopole was a committed Christian minister while Flax Katoba Musopole was an ardent atheist. Rev. Musopole was committed to the kingdom of God with Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord, while Flax Musopole was committed to a worldly humanist kingdom. It was President Kwame Nkrumah who had revised one of the sayings of Jesus when he declared, "Seek ye first the political kingdom and all these other things will be added unto you." Flax Musopole would have gone along with that while Rev. Musopole could not have approved of it, thinking politicians were going too far in comparing themselves with Jesus, the Christ.

Rev. Musopole was committed to proclaiming spiritual salvation. Though he was not opposed to political liberation from colonialism he did not actively participate in the struggle. His priority was the kingdom of God and its practical implications for the lived life of human beings. Flax Musopole proclaimed political liberation and was

actively involved in its promotion. He saw colonialism as an evil to be fought and eradicated. Rev. Musopole preached liberation from the power of sin, Flax Musopole preached liberation from colonialism and white control in order to realize economic progress.

The Christian approach advocated by Rev. Musopole was not against political freedom as such but he did not accept the methods that were being advocated by the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC) of which Flax Musopole was an ardent member and leader. While Flax Musopole considered Christianity to be the opium of the masses, as Karl Marx had argued, Rev. Musopole considered it to be the only way of salvation for all humanity and the promoter of righteousness. While the two brothers represented diametrically opposed commitments, with disagreements on many points, they got along well through their kinship bond. They tolerated each other's views and missions in life.

Yoram Musopole's Ministry During the State of Emergency

In 1947, the congregation of Misuku accepted Yoram Musopole's candidature for ministerial training and he left for the Overtoun Institution at Khondowe for the second time. Upon completing his training in 1950, he was sent to Wenya congregation as parish minister. In 1954, he was transferred to Bulambya Congregation and was stationed at Ifumbo, about 20 km east of Chitipa Boma.

Bulambya congregation covered the entire Kameme area. The language here was Chilambya, spoken in a variety of dialects. There were other languages unrelated to Chilambya, such as Chimambwe, Chinyika and Chinamwanga. Since Chindali was closer to Chilambya, he preached in Chindali. They used the Chingonde New Testament and hymn book. People prayed in whatever local language they spoke. School textbooks were in Chitumbuka. He was both Parish Minister and also Manager of Schools in all the four congregations of Wenya, Misuku, Nthalire and Bulambya. Bill Jackson, an Irish Livingstonia missionary, describes him as follows:

I remained for a few days with Rev. Musopole. I had taken a great liking to him and felt at home with him. He was probably in his early forties, stocky, and thick-set, with a strong face and chin. He had a great, deep voice, and he was slow to speak, taking care about what he said. He was a wise man, and respected, both in the church at large and in his parish.³

When Rev. Musopole arrived at Ifumbo, he initiated new development projects. He mobilized the community using the church members to extend the road from Chinunkha to Ifumbo so as to enable the vehicles to reach the manse. The main challenge with road construction had to do with bridges since there were many streams from the Misuku Hills. The community was easy to mobilize because most of its leaders were dedicated members of the church. There were a few who were outside the church on account of polygamy or beer drinking but even in their case often their most senior wife would be a member of the church and active in the Women's Guild. Therefore, the relationship between the church and the community was very cordial when it came to community development projects.

The second project that he initiated was a public market on Saturday. There was a market on Sunday across the Songwe River at Ilondo in Tanganyika which attracted many people from Ifumbo and impacted negatively on church attendance. In order to address this problem, it was decided by the church session after consulting the community at large to introduce a market at Ifumbo on Saturday. On the opening day, about ten people came to sell and Rev. Musopole bought something from each of them.⁴ The following Saturday more people came to the market, eventually forcing the Sunday market across the border to close. People from Ilondo started coming to the Ifumbo market and this contributed to the economic progress of the area. The market remains operational today.

The third project was to upgrade the junior primary school to a senior primary school. This meant mobilizing the whole community, led by the church, to make bricks for a three-classroom block to be

³ Bill Jackson, *Send us Friends*, Belfast: privately published, (n.d.), p. 20.

⁴ Personal recollection.

constructed as well as teachers' houses. Ifumbo children no longer had to walk daily the 8 km to Chinunkha Senior Primary School. From the first Standard Eight class at Ifumbo three were selected for secondary school and so too in the second and third years.⁵ The school attracted pupils from near and far on account of being well staffed. Since he was Manager of Schools, Rev Musopole was able to recruit the best teachers. Many government officers on inspection tours came to visit the school and were hosted at the manse.

The fourth project was the construction of a new nine-roomed brick manse on a self-help basis to replace the previous wattle and daub structure. Of the nine rooms one was used as a bookstore and also acted as a post-office where stamps were bought and letters left to be taken to the main post-office at Fort Hill, which was the gateway to the rest of the country and the world.

Furthermore, Rev. Musopole, who loved singing, was very committed to ecumenical relationships among Protestant Churches bordering on the Songwe River. To that end, he initiated the Union Choir, bringing together six congregations, three from the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, namely Bulambya, Misuku and Ngerenge and three from the Moravian Church in Tanganyika, namely Mulenda, Isoko and Itumba. They would gather in a chosen place to learn music using tonic-solfa, to examine newly trained music teachers, to learn new songs and evangelistic methods.

However, above all these activities, he considered himself first and foremost a minister of Word and Sacrament. His calling was to teach and proclaim the Word and provide pastoral support to the flock. His sermons were teaching sermons aimed at spiritual growth for holy living, community moral transformation and hope for eternal life. Rev. Musopole was not given to politically charged prophetic sermons even though a basis for them was there in the prophetic

⁵ I belonged to this third group and was selected to Likuni Boys Secondary School in Lilongwe District, while the other two went to Mzuzu Secondary School.

books of the Bible. It might be that since this part of Nyasaland had few European settlers, the exploitation and injustices that people, especially in the Southern Region, experienced on a daily basis, were not an immediate issue of concern.

Therefore, the political concern was mostly with the national issues of colonialism, the Federation, and the demand for independence so as to be free from oppressive laws and eventual white domination. He could agree with political agitation while respecting the "Rule of Law" but did consider it unjust when that "Rule of Law" was used to oppress Africans and thus deny them justice. This was the position of the Protestant missionaries who had long been the *de facto* representatives of the Africans in the Legislative Council. He believed in the goodness of the missionaries and their goodwill towards the Africans. After all, the Livingstonia Mission had ceased to be and had been replaced by the Livingstonia Synod with local leadership as part of the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP). This gave him hope that eventually Africans would gain their political freedom, hopefully without violence.

For the majority of rural Christians in Bulambya the eschatological slant of the gospel made politics too mundane because this world was bound to pass away. Like Abraham, they were looking forward to a city in heaven whose maker is God (Hebrews 11:10). This is evident from the choir songs that they composed and sang during the Union Choir evangelistic assemblies. One of the songs, *Abele mwe bikemo* (Be warned you holy ones) was based on the book of Revelation. It goes on to state that Satan has been unleashed and they should be ready for the fight even if it means they have to be burnt alive or spill their blood (Revelation 13-20). They should not be afraid but be courageous and trust in Jesus who will be with them even in death. Nonetheless, they were still affected by unjust and draconian colonial policies and resented especially the punishments attached to them for failure to comply.

In the middle of the 1950s, people loved the great open-air evangelistic meetings lasting for a week where evangelistic messages

of fire and brimstone were proclaimed, accompanied by enthusiastic singing by Union choirs from various invited congregations. While there was little didactic teaching, most of the time was spent listening to popular preachers who dramatized the Word of God in very imaginative manner, often using allegory and parables.

There was an evangelist from Tanzania named Kapanyalibeyu Kayange, an old, thin, tall gentleman who preached in a shrill voice, often against polygamy and drunkenness. Another famous preacher was a Mr Lembe from Misuku. He was short in stature and often exuded great joy. He was nicknamed *Nduma nene* (Send me), words from the prophet Isaiah, because in one sermon, he kept repeating that phrase. He was also called Zakeyu (Zacchaeus) on account of his short stature. He preached and entertained people with his illustrations. In one of his sermons, he likened Jesus to a swing rope that enables one to cross over. He was preaching under a tree, and suddenly he caught one of the branches and swung to illustrate his point. A third preacher was a lady called NaMuyota from Wenya who was equally impressive. She would start her preaching with a song, *Yesu ndi chisime cha maji gha umoyo* (Jesus is the well of living water) and the congregation responded with *Zaninge, zaninge mummwepo maji gha umoyo* (Come and drink the living water). These were popular preachers who were known far and wide.

The churches were vibrant in a number of aspects, for instance, constructing churches, schools, roads, and visiting the sick and those in need. In this way, many were attracted to Christianity. However, it was not only these aspects that attracted them to Christianity, but more often than not, the experience of a new transformed life after repentance. The hymns composed by African Christians bear testimony to this. One such hymn states: *Nonenge, ena nonenge apa sitiki imbibi; sokilepo pa kiyeni kya yu Kyala* (I'm guilty, indeed, I'm guilty for accepting sin, and as a consequence, I've moved away from God's presence). Such hymns were sung with deep feeling as people responded to the gospel. Therefore, this living faith spread far and

wide. People would walk long distances to be part of these evangelistic gatherings where Holy Communion was also celebrated. Easter services were often the high point of the year.

Bill Jackson in his book *Send Us Friends*, writes about the trials some Christians faced during the State of Emergency when they were confronted by members of the Malawi Congress Party demanding that they become members by force. Congress people tended to scorn the church, and linked Christianity with the white man. Others heard that since the church had failed to win freedom, it was up to Congress to do this, and in this way persuaded weaker Christians to join them. Some of them could be said to have denied Christ. It was however quite clear to many Christians that they could not join Congress because of its attitude to the church, even though they approved of its aims as set out by Dr. Kamuzu Banda.⁶ There were also many Christians who were willing to suffer loss of property and even to die for the sake of Christ rather than be forced to buy a Congress membership card.

Flax Katoba Musopole

Flax Katoba Musopole chose to travel to South Africa for "greener pastures," a journey that many of his generation had made upon finishing their primary schooling. Secondary education was just beginning to be made available in colonial Malawi in the late 1940s and opportunities were limited for many boys and girls. He was following a well-beaten path that involved much walking where there was no public transport. In South Africa he worked during the day and studied at night, eventually gaining entry into Cape Town University in 1953 after passing his Matriculation Examinations. The Nationalist Party had just come to power in 1948 stirring up much opposition to their policies of separate development. As with many universities, students were politically active and Katoba was attracted to the Communist Party. He was in correspondence with others,

⁶ Jackson, *Send Us Friends*, p. 113.

including Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who were agitating for change in Nyasaland. Katoba was expelled from the University and later deported back to Nyasaland in 1957.

Returning to Chinongo Village in the Misuku area, he became involved in various self-developmental projects, such as the Misuku Coffee Cooperative, the construction of a 5 km road from Mughese Catholic Mission to Chinongo village (popularly known as Katoba's road) and organizing the Nyasaland African Congress in Karonga. He accompanied Dr. Banda during his tour of the northern region in 1958.

Besides being known by his self-help spirit and political commitment to African liberation, he was also famous as someone who denied the existence of God and told everyone he met about this. He was probably the first in the whole area to go public about his personal commitment to atheism, causing shock and scandalization to many since even traditional spirituality did not deny God, though the ancestors took centre stage as mediators. While he did not aggressively promote his atheism as an ideology for people to embrace, it informed his political activity vis-a-vis the Christianity which by now was deeply entrenched. He dismissed Christianity as of no consequence vis-a-vis political liberation. He wanted people to know that he had nothing to do with Christianity or with God.

Each time he visited his brother Rev. Musopole, he complained that every book on the shelf was about God. He also objected when grace was said over meals. He worked even on Sundays to the shock of many Christians and even non-Christians who took Sunday off as a holy day of rest. It is on this point of atheism that he did not see eye to eye with his brother, the Rev. Musopole. They represented diametrically opposed visions and worldviews. Paradoxically, however, they remained good brothers and friends who tolerated each other, though for different reasons. They both exemplified and subscribed to the nobility of humanity for which cause they were in the struggle.

As a consequence, Flax Musopole was also committed to the struggle for political liberation and self-determination by getting rid of colonialism, the imposed Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, and global Western imperialism by whatever means necessary; and by teaching his people the value of self-reliance. He never lorded it over others. He belonged to the group of younger and educated politicians who canvassed for more radical views and methods of speeding the struggle for independence. He encouraged people to grow more coffee so as to develop the Misuku Coffee Cooperative. He established some business interests at Fort Hill and had a house near Wenela which became a political meeting point. One of the cooperative trucks, a Thames Trader, ended up being grounded at this house when the Cooperative folded up. He was in touch with other politically like-minded people in the district and the region and they kept updating each other on political developments in the country and what was going on in the Central and East African regions. The late 1950s was a time when there was a lot of expectation in the air about political developments taking place. The government had made some moves in pacifying the Africans, but it was too little and too late. The talk of Dr. Hastings Banda's return had raised people's political expectations.

Katoba was a man of great energy and given to multi-tasking. He did a lot of walking and learned to think on his feet. He travelled a lot to other places for political meetings and kept updating others on what was happening. Public transport was difficult in those days but he used whatever means he could find. He was always a person in a hurry, never lingering too long in one place or on the same issue. In this way he was preparing people for the time of action as the Congress looked to the return of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda. He did not like idle people, whether in the family or in the party. He was always busy doing something. Having travelled to South Africa at the time when the Nationalist Party took over the government, he experienced firsthand what white domination and racism meant for the Africans. This is one of the reasons he opposed the Federation

and supported demands for independence. Therefore, he fostered a spirit of self-help development. He got himself personally involved in digging the roads. He was a down to earth ideologue.

It is interesting that the two Musopoles were very developmentally conscious and good community mobilisers. Their father, Kenani Musopole, from whom they may have learned this attitude, was equally good at multi-tasking as community leader, village tailor and teacher. This also reflected the approach of Livingstonia Mission which offered an education that equipped people with skills for industrial development. Therefore, religion was not something to separate them, and after all, for Rev. Musopole, Flax Musopole was the type of person he was called to love and pray for in the hope of his conversion. For him, his brother was a lost soul to be pitied and who needed to be won to Christ. Therefore, how else could he relate to him, but to love him and live in the hope that someday his brother would see the light of the gospel, even as he continued to pray for him.

Since the church was now moving, even though belatedly, towards Africanization, Rev. Musopole supported the demands for political independence, even though he differed with Flax on the methods of achieving it. Nevertheless, they adopted an attitude of "live and let live." On a personal level they remained good friends and brothers. This reflects the African social ethos where kinship relationships generally run deeper than ideological commitment. When kinsfolk among the Ndali people swear by the *inguku inyelu* (white chicken) it means the relationship has irretrievably broken down. For the two brothers, it could never come to that point. For both of them, the deep implications of their faith commitments rested on the realization and preservation of human dignity. Hence both could adhere to the policy of "live and let live." The two remained faithful to their respective creeds until they died. Katoba Flax Musopole would have nothing to do with God even as he drew near to death. It is reported that when he was finally on his deathbed, he chased someone who wanted to pray with him as he lay in a mission hospital at Ekwendeni.

Upon his death in 1987, the community performed *indingali*, a dance performed for heroes and rulers. However, just before he was interred, Rev. Yoram Musopole stepped forward and led the community in prayer.

Winds of Change in Nyasaland

Winds of political change started to blow harder in 1958 upon the return of Dr Banda from his long absence in South Africa, United States of America, and Britain. He demanded three things, the breakup of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland, the end of colonialism, and the gaining of independence for the African people of Nyasaland without further delay. Finally, a man had been found who understood the whites and was ready to challenge them publicly in a manner that no African in Nyasaland had done before. There was much excitement in the air. As he toured the country to be introduced, Dr. Banda held a meeting at Chinunkha at which Rev. Musopole offered an opening prayer. These visits whipped high the political expectation among the people. The latent anger against colonialism soon broke out into violence when Dr. Banda was arrested in March 1959 and detained on trumped up charges that he was planning a massacre of Europeans. Even Ifumbo was engulfed into the political violence as a response. The church found itself being suspected of collaborating with the colonial forces in spite of it being African. It became necessary for the church to explain itself as to where it stood. There were times when it found itself a victim even before it explained its position.

Leading the fight was Katoba Flax Musopole who now became actively involved in the cause of the Nyasaland African Congress. Bill Jackson reports a meeting where the two sides engaged in a dialogue in order to get some mutual understanding and diffuse tension. Both Rev. Musopole and Flax Musopole were in attendance. Jackson writes of a visit he paid to Rev. Musopole:

Over the next day or two, we exchanged our news, and a long job it was. During the previous October, there had been a meeting at the manse between members of the Congress including Katoba, one of their leaders,

and Mr. Musopole and representative elders of the church. They had discussed their differences but had made little progress. There had been, and still was, continual friction between the Congress and the church members. Congress people tended to scorn the church and linked Christianity with the white man.⁷

For the Nyasaland African Congress, it was time to fight and to do so to victory. The struggle was put into a new gear and people had to choose sides. Either they were with "Congress" or against it. To be neutral was to be seen as a traitor to the cause and in sympathy with white presence. That choice created a dilemma for many Christians whose faith was not firmly fixed and for the church itself in terms of its public perception.

Also for Flax Musopole in his struggle for political self-determination, the entrenched Christianity in rural Misuku and Bulambya areas created a dilemma. He too found himself between a rock and a hard place, especially with his brother on the other side. While he did not want to alienate the Christian population which was influential, he wanted to attack all symbols of colonialism in the area and that included the missionary presence. The presence of missionaries, if any in the area, made Christianity suspect in the eyes of the Congress. However, in Chitipa District there were only a very few white families and a few Roman Catholic white priests and sisters.

Many Christians did not want to become members of Congress largely because they considered themselves to be under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. This did not negate political justice but they felt they would be compromising their faith if they were to belong to both the Church and the Congress. Since the members of Congress had been educated in church schools, they also had divided loyalties. For Rev. and Mrs. Musopole, their faith in the freedom brought about by the Kingdom of God from the power of sin of which colonialism was only one of its manifestations, considered Congress to be an earthly body to which they could not give their prior allegiance.

⁷ Jackson, *Send Us Friends*, p. 143.

Their allegiance was first and foremost to Christianity, which they understood to represent the Kingdom of God. For this they were prepared to pay the highest price even if it meant suffering martyrdom. They also prayed that it would not have to come to that stage. When Mrs Tupokiwe Musopole was threatened and told to run away, she retorted that she would not run away, but die with her children if necessary. The irony is that Flax Musopole too was aware that it might also come to him paying the highest price as a wanted man. Some had indeed paid the final price already in Nkhata-Bay and other parts of the country. At Ifumbo, a few leaders had been beaten and arrested. The relationship between Christianity and Congress was an ambiguous one especially for the African Christians who suffered the most from Congress members.

Flax Musopole worked with other nationalists in the region, including Dunduzu Chisiza, Kanyama Chiume, Orton Chirwa, Blair Ndundu, Nelson Mwambungu, Muyata Kanjeri, Abner Mwiba and Dorothy Tijepani NyaGondwe. Most of these had travelled abroad for either work or studies. Therefore, they were well informed on political matters in the region as a whole.

The first thing the political agitators did was to sabotage symbols of colonialism. They dug up the airports at Karonga and Fort Hill, turned the office of the District Commissioner at Karonga into a toilet, burned "The Farm" at Chinunkha and chased away the white official there, destroyed the bridges between Fort Hill and Chinunkha over the Yamba and Kaseye rivers and Chinunkha Marsh, and ransacked the Assemblies of God Mission at Mubula under Pastor Ragnar and Alice Udd, American missionaries in the Misuku Area. At Ifumbo, the pupils rioted. They marched to the veterinary office pulled it down and burnt whatever papers were in it. They then moved to destroy the dipping tank which for them symbolized bad government policies. However, they did not destroy the dispensary, another government institution, because it was a needed asset even for them. The school belonging to the church was also needed and so they did nothing to it.

Flax Musopole was all over the region advocating a violent struggle even though mostly confined to the Karonga District. Bill Jackson reported that he visited Livingstonia in February 1959 and violence erupted soon after his departure.⁸ John McCracken writes of that incident:

"As tension mounted Flax Musopole, one of Malawi's very radical politicians, led militant nationalists in the north in vandalizing mission property at Livingstonia, Ekwendeni, and Loudon. At least two Livingstonia teachers were beaten. The house of another teacher, George Phiri, was stoned."⁹

The Federal Intelligence Security Bureau reported:

Elsewhere, however, and particularly in the Northern Province, the resistance was more tenacious. With the security forces "thin on the ground." Flax Katoba Musopole was able to evade arrest. And with his freedom secured, he travelled widely through the Karonga District, appearing one day at Ngerenge, another at Misuku, and another at Bulambya—leaving behind a trail of torched buildings and sabotaged bridges. By 23rd March, 26 bridges in the north had been damaged, 10 completely destroyed and 76 houses burnt to the ground.¹⁰

The Karonga Hills terrain was daunting, but Flax Musopole had grown up there and walked across the mountains as he went to school in Karonga so he was familiar with the pathways. It was difficult to trace him. The mountainous terrain extends all the way into Tanganyika where he had some relatives, including Anganile NaMusopole, sister to Rev. Yoram Musopole, who was married there. Therefore, under his leadership, Congress members were emboldened and behaved as they pleased. Not even dispatches of military reinforcements to the north brought his activities to a halt.

⁸ Jackson, *Send Us Friends*, p. 64.

⁹ John McCracken, "Missionaries and Nationalists: Scotland and the 1959 State of Emergency in Malawi," in Afe Adogame and Andrew Lawrence, (eds), *Africa in Scotland and Scotland in Africa: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Hybridities*, Leiden: Brill, 2014, pp. 42-73.

¹⁰ Federal Intelligence and Security Bureau, p. 355.

Politics at Ifumbo

At Ifumbo, the Congress office was built next to the church. This had symbolic significance. It presented itself as a new religion rooted in the African worldview competing with the foreign religion of the Free Church of Scotland. The meetings that took place there had a quasi-religious atmosphere. Most of the members were in their late teens and early twenties with a few older people. All were very excited. It was the final push against colonialism. Singing took place during the meetings led by Maxwell Mwamlima, a former congregational choir leader, who had been excommunicated and now composed political songs. One song issued a warning to non-members:

<i>Weya ukukana ukwingila,</i>	Friend, you are refusing to become a member,
<i>Abazungu wope te bamwinyu,</i>	The whites are not your companions;
<i>Weya, weya, weya.</i>	O comrade, O comrade, O comrade!
<i>Ukukana choni?</i>	Why are you refusing?
<i>Amasiku ghabuka,</i>	The days are gone [for colonialism].
<i>Ukulindizgachi?</i>	Why are you waiting?
<i>Izagha wingile.</i>	You come and join.
<i>We zgachitima, zgachitima</i>	It is so sad, indeed, so sad,
<i>Nanti ukukana,</i>	If you are refusing
<i>Izagha wingile,</i>	Come and be a member,
<i>Tukubalindilila,</i>	We are waiting for you.
<i>Weya, weya, weya.</i>	O comrade, O comrade, O comrade! ¹¹

This was a direct appeal aimed at the Christians who were adamant in rejecting membership of Congress in favour of their loyalty to Christ since Congress demanded a rival loyalty with its four corner-stones of unity, loyalty, discipline and obedience.

¹¹ From my own personal recollection having participated in some of the meetings out of curiosity as a child.

Dr Banda was presented as the "Messiah" who had come to usher in a new political kingdom, and people were being persuaded to become its members. Congress was seen as ushering in a new way of salvation, an alternative to what the missionaries had brought. To that end, Flax Musopole and others were the "new apostles" of the new political religion. They were ready to persecute those who stood in opposition to the new political faith.

Ifumbo manse and church were viewed as symbols of "white" presence and therefore a legitimate target. However, since the church was self-governing, led by an African minister, and was not a government institution, Congress members targeted individual members and left the church undisturbed. As Rev. Musopole went about his pastoral duties, veiled threatening messages were sent to his wife Tupokiwe, warning her of dire consequences if she did not run away. As indicated above, she stood her ground largely on account of her faith. One local politician was heard complaining, "*Ichantanda ichi chitakwimba haa, chili bulo myee*" (Lambya which translates literally and derogatively, "This thing of a woman does not listen, she is quietly defiant"). They accused Rev. Musopole of preventing people from joining Congress, a charge he denied. He told them they could not force people to become members of Congress since this would be contrary to the Human Rights Charter that Congress had adopted.

One day, he accepted an invitation to attend a public meeting of Congress. They thought he was going to ignore it and thus find an excuse to burn the manse. At the meeting, he explained to them how the Livingstonia Mission had surrendered power to the Africans ahead of the colonial government and how the missionaries were supportive of the "Congress" in its demands and that they had meetings with Banda before his arrest. When they heard this, they confessed their intention to burn the manse and apologized. In this way peace was maintained. The Misuku manse was set on fire, but the fire failed because the grass thatch was wet from the rains the previous day.

Flax Musopole, Sunda Kayange, Abner Mwiba and Tije pani NyaGondwe, a friend and companion of Katoba Musopole,¹² passed by Ifumbo school one day and ordered it closed or else they were coming back to burn it down. They had closed down all the schools in Misuku area and were doing the same in Bulambya. The teachers complied the week following and closed the school. The group continued to Chinunkha where they burned and ransacked the Farm but spared the Kaseye Mission. However, after one week the school at Ifumbo re-opened and continued to operate normally. As Manager of Church Schools, Rev. Musopole managed to persuade the local Congress leadership to keep the school open for the education of their children. Other schools were closed for a whole year.

Soon a contingent of Federal soldiers arrived at Ifumbo to repair the dipping tank and arrest the local Congress leadership. Even though no one was killed, many were badly wounded. That week many people slept in the bush since the soldiers often attacked at night. It was the rainy season. After making sure peace had been restored, the Federal contingent left. The search for the elusive Flax Musopole was continued by Lloyd Maxwell (known as *Mwang-ambaku*), a coloured who spoke fluent Chindali. He passed through Ifumbo Manse twice.

On Christmas Eve the church used to hold a nativity play. The 1959 Christmas season was no exception. People gathered in the church in the evening for the nativity play, unaware that local notables who were not church members and some notorious youths belonging to Congress were planning to disturb the event. They came to the church drunk and sat at the back of the church where they kept making noise as the play was going on. Efforts to calm them down were defied until they became violent and unruly. The group took over the church and turned it into a dance hall for the night. This was

¹² Katoba and Tije pani were often together during this time leading to the rumour that they were lovers in disguise, but as soon as the struggle was over, they went their separate ways.

part of the local nationalist reaction to the presence of the church which until this time had been spared from violence. It was like a bitter residue of nationalist feelings especially when the rest of the country was calm after the arrest of most leaders due to the State of Emergency.

This sacrilege did not go down well with the church leadership under Rev. Musopole. The matter was reported to the police at Chitipa and to the District Commissioner at Karonga, Gordon Landreth, who was a Christian. The six ringleaders were arrested, tried, and imprisoned for six months. Among them was the businessman, Beckson Kamisa (also known as *Machipisa*), two sons of the village headman, and Makewell Mfungwe another businessman and son of a church elder. Upon their release the community gathered at the village headman's place to welcome them and celebrate their release. They all came back chastened.

When the nativity play incident took place, Flax Musopole had already been arrested in Tanganyika and returned to Malawi to face trial. However, by this time, the attitude of his followers had changed drastically. In 1960, Rev. Musopole was sent to Rutenganio in Tanzania to do a joint Nyakyusa/Ngonde New Testament translation. On his departure, Beckson Kamisa sent him a gift of a blanket and five pounds British sterling. Makewell Mfungwe was later converted and became a very effective evangelist within the church he once defied.

After the meeting, the two Musopoles did not meet again until after the Emergency was lifted and Flax Musopole released from detention. After his release from detention, Flax was appointed Clerk of Karonga District Council. He wrote to his brother Rev. Musopole to help him identify a lady for him to marry, but at the expected time, he never showed up.

The Ambiguities of Nationalism

In 2002 John McCracken published an article on the ambiguities of nationalism in Malawi in the 1956-66 period, with particular focus on the activities of Flax Musopole.¹³ He stated that the aims of the article were: firstly, to throw light on one of the most important yet most neglected episodes in the history of Malawian nationalism: the emergence of a radical peasant-based movement in the north, which gained strength from 1956 and continued to play an active role in the Karonga district in 1959, long after overt resistance had been suppressed elsewhere. Secondly, to examine the decline in northern involvement in nationalist politics, which I date not from the cabinet crisis but rather from the founding of the Malawi Congress Party in 1959.

Then McCracken goes on to give a rationale for his two aims.

In both sections I seek to escape from too narrow a focus on the role of the first generation of cabinet ministers by extending my analysis to the activities of other less familiar activists, notably "General" Flax Musopole. It is my contention that Musopole's heroic, tragic and, ultimately, profoundly ambivalent life story provides us with a valuable insight into the strengths and limitations of Malawian nationalism. Regional identity, in this formulation, emerges not as the fixed construct described in a number of recent studies but as an altogether more tentative and provisional force.¹⁴

A critical appraisal of McCracken's statement is necessary here in the light of what has been written about Flax Musopole above. Was Flax Musopole a political hero? Yes, indeed, on account of his singular personal commitment to the cause of African self-determination. Was his a tragic case? Politically, yes, to some extent in that his contribution did not receive the recognition it deserved. Being a person who suffered without bitterness because he "volunteered"

¹³ John McCracken, "The Ambiguities of Nationalism: Flax Musopole and the Northern Factor in Malawian Politics, 1956-1966," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2002, pp. 67-87.

¹⁴ McCracken, "The Ambiguities of Nationalism," p. 67.

himself to a cause in which he strongly believed, he did not need to depend on it for survival once the cause was won. In his view, his life was much bigger than the political cause he had espoused. Once the struggle was won, he needed to spend his energy on other concerns, namely, raising a family since he had been single all along, and pursuing a business and a settled life.

Was his political career "profoundly" ambivalent? If so, then it had to do with a disillusionment created by the one-party dictatorship having supported it during the Cabinet Crisis. He was very much a team player with specific roles, but something changed when he lost most of the members of the team following the Cabinet Crisis. In spite of becoming a junior minister for a time, he lost his political moorings and started drifting aimlessly. As the dictatorship got a firmer hold on the Party and nation, disillusionment set in, but he never gave up on the initial cause of realizing a viable independence. In private conversations, he often regretted the turn things had taken. There was an honest streak in him which came out in outbursts from time to time in conversations, though never fully articulated.

In seeking self-determination for his people, his brother Yoram was with him, but differed in the method of going about it. While Flax was for radical violent change, Yoram was for gradual change through education, evangelization, and negotiated constitutional change, with signs of that change already in the air both in the mission and government. However, for Flax Musopole, the changes were too slow and too late. Even in his own personal life, he was a person who seemed to be in a hurry. He was a restless soul constantly on the move. No wonder the Federal forces were unable to find him. Therefore, his volunteerism to the political cause and what he contributed to the accomplishment of that cause were heroic indeed.

Ironically, for those who knew what he had done, the lack of proper acknowledgement appears to be tragic indeed, but from his own self-assessment, he had done what he committed himself to do and now he had moved on to other things. He would not have fared

well under a dictatorship had he remained radical and active. Therefore, when he left politics, he was happy to settle down and run his Nachitipa Lodge business at Chitipa, raising his young family now that he was a married man. He applied the same zeal to his business as he did to politics. He swept, prepared rooms, served tea to visitors, and was always making extensions to his buildings.

The question of "profound ambiguities" is an interesting one. It is often related to an uncharted path in the lives of people and nations. It is the essential nature of our historical human existence. It arises from the fact that we come into this world without our permission and usually exit it also without our permission. History is a given and not an end even as it moves towards God's eschaton. This would have been Rev. Musopole's Christian view. It questions the idea of human autonomy and exposes it as a myth. This is why history has to be interpreted as we search for its meaning and for a hopeful future as its human agents. Did Flax Musopole feel fulfilled? From all appearances he felt fulfilled in himself and in the manner he handled his disappointments by not dwelling on them. The tragedy, however, is how a nation or even indeed a community forgets its heroes and heroines. There are many of them.

The history of Malawi is one of a continuous political struggle for a meaningful future for all, out of a troubled past. On account of dictatorship and a focus on one person, it did not provide time and space to reflect on the significant contribution of the many people who made a difference to the nation for the better. Malawi lacks a complete narrative with multiple voices. In other words, our very political history is ambiguous in that we often know what we are against but are ignorant of what we stand and strive for. We know where we have come from but are not clear as to where we want to go. Our politics is dominated by personality cults that use fear to exclude and despise. Could it be that we settle too easily for a consumer mentality (*kudiyelera ufulu*) and thus fail to address the major question of freedom for what (*ufulu wotani*)? It is supposed to be freedom for full human development for all in peace and dignity. In

the end that is what both Rev. Yoram Musopole and Flax Katoba Musopole wanted in different, but complementary, ways.

Limits to State Power in Post-independence Development in Malawi, 1964-1983

Gift Wasambo Kayira

Introduction

In 1984, the Centre of African Studies at the University of Edinburgh assembled a team of Malawianist scholars to discuss Malawi's economy which, while registering growth in the 1970s had virtually collapsed by 1983. John McCracken, who provided leadership to the conference, suggested its theme with the aim of finding an alternative pattern to the country's development. One remarkable outcome of the seminar was how it explained the country's history of miracle and mirage. Jonathan Kydd, Robert Christiansen, and others faulted the state for its policies that privileged the few elitist large-scale commercial farmers and merchants while overtaxing or ignoring the numerous peasants.¹ Not everyone at the meeting shared that view, with skeptics pointing to the investment the country had made in rural economy.² Nevertheless, those ideas coalesced into a standard explanation influencing even Guy Mhone's edited volume published

¹ See Jonathan Kydd, "Malawi in the 1970s: Development Policies and Economic Change," in *Malawi: An Alternative Pattern of Development*. Proceedings of a Seminar Held at the Centre of African Studies, University of Edinburgh, 24 and 25 May, 1984, pp. 295-380; Robert Christiansen, "Financing Malawi's Development Strategy," in *Ibid*, pp. 407-471. See also their earlier work: Jonathan Kydd and Robert E. Christiansen, "Structural Change in Malawi since Independence: Consequences of a Development Strategy Based on Large-Scale Agriculture," *World Development*, Vol. 105, 1982, pp. 355-75.

² For example, in his introductory section to the Conference Proceedings, McCracken singled out Malawi as the only country in Southern Africa that had made enormous investments in rural economic infrastructure. See his "Introduction," p. xvi.

in 1992. The latter emphasized how the post-colonial state perfected colonial tactics of exploitation and domination.³

Given that the important instruments guiding the country's development in the 1960s present no clues to the predatory policies, could this represent a misreading of the nation's development history? For instance, the 1961 Malawi Congress Party (MCP) manifesto did not propose a 'differential' development program.⁴ It sought to eliminate what its framers saw as economic inequalities that had characterized the colonial period. One of its main objectives was to "reduce inequalities in the distribution of wealth, income and power."⁵ The 1962-1965 development plan highlighted the problem of inequality and sought to "commercialize farming and make it a source of income for the masses *with little regard to who made up the masses in question* [italics added]."⁶ There is little evidence in these early documents pointing to the intent on the part of nationalists and/or post-colonial leaders to perpetuate the colonial economic tradition.

How did a state whose initial aim was to break with the colonial tradition end up entrenching the same? How do we explain that shift of policy and who were the agents of change? Did the post-colonial state seek to punish the many ordinary peasants that put it in power? Does this not contradict the "reason of the state," one aspect of

³ See Guy C.Z. Mhone, "The Political Economy of Malawi: An Overview," in G. Mhone (ed), *Malawi at the Crossroads: The Post-Colonial Political Economy*, Harare: SAPES Books, 1992, pp. 1–33; See also Jonathan M. Kaunda, "Malawi: The Post-Colonial State, Development, and Democracy," *Africa: Rivista Trimestrale Di Studi e Documentazione Africa/Istituto Italo-Africano*, No. 3, 1995, p. 316.

⁴ "Differential" as used here connotes the idea of pursuing two development policies, one supporting the estate sector, the other exploiting the peasantry.

⁵ *Malawi Congress Party Manifesto for the General Elections*, Limbe: MCP Publication, August 1961, p. 15.

⁶ Nyasaland Government, *Nyasaland Development Plan, 1962 -1965*, Zomba: Government Printer, 1961, p. 53.

which is to legitimize its rule over the people entrusted to its care?⁷ The existing literature is far less clear about the answers to these questions.

This chapter uses archival sources to build on the skepticism that participants at the Edinburgh conference, including McCracken, raised on the country's economic pattern as projected by Kydd, Christiansen, and others. It does not seek to challenge the overall bias of state policy towards the estate sector in the 1970s which has been well explained by the available statistical data.⁸ Its aim is to understand the specific historical forces that helped to define not only the nature of the state but also the subsequent ideas and practices of development that emerged after independence. It locates these forces within the conflictual relationship that evolved between the United Nations and the United Kingdom development experts on the one hand and the local political leaders and their technical advisors on the other. The chapter reflects on the dilemma of the early post-colonial state to reconcile the objectives of achieving national sovereignty and economic independence. It shows how foreign development experts helped to push the post-colonial state, forcing it to overstretch itself economically to defend its sovereignty. That exercise also involved reneging from its earlier pledge to promote a development regime that sought to bring about economic parity among the masses. While proving successful in the early years

⁷ I owe the concept of the "reason of the state" to Crawford Young. See Crawford Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997; Merwin Crawford Young, *The Postcolonial State in Africa Fifty Years of Independence, 1960-2010*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2012.

⁸ Erik Green is one scholar who challenged this literature arguing that there is little empirical evidence to justify the view that the state constrained the peasantry in the country. See his "Modern Agricultural History in Malawi: Perspectives on Policy-Choice Explanations," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 50, No. 3, 2007, pp. 115–33.

of independence, the state's attempt to insulate itself from outside interference proved a daunting task to achieve.

Unlike what we see in the existing literature on the subject, this chapter questions the internalist perspective for exaggerating the power and autonomy of the post-colonial developmental state in Malawi. Instead, it points to a fractious state, less hegemonic, and one in which different parties contested ideas and practices of development. Such contestations gave rise to varied, unintended, and often surprising economic policies that proved hostile to the long-term development of the country. By paying attention to multiple voices that shaped the country's development trajectory, the chapter "decentres and contextualises the state."⁹ It problematizes the state in ways that forces us to see beyond state autonomy while being mindful of its limits as an agent of development. Such an object requires an in-depth analysis of the debates on the African state, a subject that guides discussion in the subsequent section.

The African State Debate

A search for answers to the questions highlighted above requires that we shun first, the internalist perspective that has for long guided much of the country's political economy scholarship and second, the Weberian concept of the state. The latter, the chapter argues, puts undue emphasis on the coercive power of the African state. Jonathan Kydd, Robert Christiansen, Jonathan Kaunda, Guy Mhone and others, belong to a group of scholars whose analyses of the country's economic history has marginalized other alternative explanations.

Guy Mhone argued that the 1980s structural adjustment crisis occurred because of the contradictions of the model of political and economic development the state adopted at independence. In ways that replicated the nature of the colonial state, this model took the

⁹ I borrow this phrase from David C. Engerman and Corinna R. Unger, "Introduction: Towards a Global History of Modernization," *Diplomatic History*, Vol. 33, No. 3, 2009, pp. 375–85.

form of an 'iron triangle.' With Dr. Banda and his henchmen at the top, the state bureaucracy and other actors on one side, a class of agricultural and commercial entrepreneurs took the other side of the triangle.¹⁰ The model "consists of mutually determining and reinforcing political apparatus of authoritarianism, paternalism, and repression [on the one hand] and economic relations of domination and exploitation [on the other]."¹¹ According to this model, the autonomous state perfected colonial practices of dominating the peasantry while promoting the estate sector. The state achieved that exploitation through low producer prices, poor markets, land alienation, and labour policies. Mhone concludes that although it served the state well in the early years of independence, the model was a weak foundation on which to build the country's economy. Because it constrained most the numerous rural farmers in the countryside, it was just a matter of time before it fractured.

Jonathan Kaunda was equally unapologetic about this model, arguing that the dual economy was deliberate state policy that sought to perpetuate the "colonially bequeathed economic (structural) status quo, backed by an authoritarian, centralized political and administrative system."¹² The state replaced the colonial settler community with the estate sector while exploiting peasant surplus to subsidize the commercial sector and, one would add, the urban population. In that way, the state reinforced the same structural imbalances of the colonial economy. For Kaunda, the post-colonial leadership, which had a considerable share in commercial agriculture, designed this system for self-interest. In their work which sought to understand the country's structural change since independence, Kydd and Christiansen confirmed the same model. One section of their work carried the title 'a model of structural change since independence' and spelled

¹⁰ Guy C.Z. Mhone, "The Political Economy of Malawi: An Overview," in Mhone, (ed), *Malawi at the Crossroads*, pp. 1–33.

¹¹ Ibid, 1.

¹² Kaunda, "Malawi: The Post-Colonial State, Development, and Democracy," p. 316.

out how taxation policies were deliberately designed to extract surplus from the peasantry who were subsequently reduced into wage labourers for the burgeoning estate sector.¹³ By projecting the predatory state thesis, these scholars reversed the romantic perspective earlier scholars like Humphrey and Acharya had advanced. The latter two had praised the state for promoting an export-oriented economy that brought dividends in the early years of independence.¹⁴

The works in question, however, did not adequately discuss the overall historical context in which such policies and projects evolved and the forces that impacted on the decision-making process. This could perhaps be an unfair criticism of Kydd who, in his 1984 monograph-like paper, acknowledged the political pressure Western aid agencies, notably the World Bank, put on Dr. Banda in the early years of independence.¹⁵ His overall impression was that Dr. Banda, whom he saw as driving the course of the economy, retained his autonomy. For Kydd, it was only later with the crisis of 1980 that the Western aid agencies seriously attempted to obstruct Banda's policies. Kydd's work, therefore, reinforced the version of an autonomous state in which both internal and external forces had minimal influence. This kind of analysis is not surprising because in most of the works under review, the unit of analysis was a 'leviathan state' and one that fits well Max Weber's conceptualization of a state. The Weberian concept of the state is one in which the state has power to dominate or exercise hegemony over the rest of the society, often using force.¹⁶ Such a state is strong, legitimate, and operates autonomously. Rarely do the dictates of capital or other societal forces

¹³ Kydd and Christiansen, "Structural Change in Malawi since Independence," pp. 355-75

¹⁴ S.N. Acharya, "Development Perspectives and Priorities in sub-Saharan Africa," *Finance and Development*, Vol. 18, no 1, 1981, pp. 16-24; David H. Humphrey, "Malawi's Economic Progress and Prospects," *The Eastern Africa Economic Review*, Vol. 5, No. 2, 1973, pp. 71-104.

¹⁵ Kydd, "Malawi in the 1970," pp. 295-380.

¹⁶ Max Weber et al, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, Abingdon; New York: Routledge, 1967, p. 78.

influence it. It is an ideal state that sovereign societies should seek to become.

While this conception of the state almost sunk into the dustbin of history in political science literature for a good part of the 1950s, it resurfaced in the 1980s as a significant unit for analyzing national politics.¹⁷ Associated with names such as Theda Skocpol, Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Eric Nordlinger, Stephen Krasner and others, state-centred analysis re-emerged to challenge literature that had robbed the state of its autonomy and reduced it into one operating at the mercy of societal forces.¹⁸ The first three authors are behind the celebrated 1985 edited volume, *Bringing the State Back In*, which served as a manifesto of their mission. It is not in the interest of this chapter to delve deeper into those debates. One extract from Skocpol's earlier work, however, deserves citing at length because it represented this kind of thinking better. "The state properly conceived," she argued, "is no mere arena in which socio-economic struggles are fought out. It is, rather, a set of administrative, policing, and military organizations headed, and more or less well-

¹⁷ One of the reasons why scholars discarded the state as a conceptual framework had to do with the rise of new political institutions in the mid-20th century including political parties, pressure groups, mass media and others. Under such circumstances, the use of a "political system" was desirable because it accommodated all such groups. See Gabriel A. Almond, "The Return to the State," *American Political Science Review*, Vol. 82, 1988, p. 82. For a general introduction of the debate on the usefulness of the state as a unit of analysis see Timothy Mitchell, "The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics," *The American Political Science Review*, Vol. 85, No. 1, 1991, pp. 77–96.

¹⁸ See Eric A. Nordlinger, *On the Autonomy of the Democratic State*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981; Theda Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions: A Comparative Analysis of France, Russia, and China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979; Theda Skocpol, Peter B. Evans, and Dietrich Rueschemeyer, *Bringing the State Back In*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986; Stephen D. Krasner, *Defending the National Interest: Raw Materials Investments and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Princeton, N.J.: Princeton UP., 1978.

coordinated by, an executive authority. Any state first and fundamentally extracts resources from society and deploys these resources to create and support coercive and administrative organizations."¹⁹

Despite variations in their arguments, these scholars viewed the state as an autonomous entity, with individuals or state institutions making independent decisions irrespective of any societal pressure. "The statist approach," summarizes Mitchell, "always begins from the assumption that the state is a distinct entity, opposed to and set apart from a larger entity called society."²⁰ Thus, this scholarship emphasized a state-society dichotomy in which the two were independent of and/or opposed to each other. Under this conceptualization, the power to decide on the socio-political or economic direction of a country rested not with the society but the state and its machinery.

Building on this view, Crawford Young argued that the post-colonial African state, just like many others, has always been autonomous and operates according to a particular state logic, what he calls the "reason of the state." The reason of the state comprises six imperatives—hegemony, autonomy, security, legitimacy, revenue, and accumulation.²¹ What is anomalous in the African context, however, is that the reason of the state (which should guide state bureaucrats) is not distinguishable from interests of a given political regime, often guided by the ambitions of the political elites. For Young, most bureaucrats have worked in conformity to the will of the political leaders. Young sees this dominance of political interests as the source of Africa's economic challenges. He, therefore, suggests the need to decolonize the African state to make it more inclusive.

Young's thesis is unusual because it displays both the authoritarian nature and the weakness of the African state at the same time. While the post-colonial state is autonomous—because it operates according

¹⁹ Skocpol, *States and Social Revolutions*, p. 29.

²⁰ Mitchell, "The Limits of the State," p. 89.

²¹ Young, *The African Colonial State in Comparative Perspective*, pp. 35–42.

to the reason of the state which is inseparable from political interests—it is also ill-suited for a development assignment. What Young should also have emphasized, however, is that it is this same reason of the state that weakens its autonomy, making it less hegemonic than demonstrated. For instance, the ability of the state to meet the concerns of the society may well enhance its legitimacy. However, to maintain that level of legitimacy the state may settle for compromises rather than forcing its will on the society. Again, the need to secure funding from outside sources weakens its power to act autonomously from outside aid agencies.²²

Moreover, it is problematic to argue that political leaders always subject state bureaucrats to their will as Young would want us to believe. And as Naomi Chazan has illustrated, even under the most authoritarian regimes, "politics, power, and control are not of necessity coterminous with the state *nor is the state bureaucracy a mere agent of the ruling elite*"²³ [italics added]. In Tanzania, for instance, Leander Schneider showed how local government officials retained their autonomy to act independently despite operating within the overall authoritarian framework of Julius Nyerere's villagization programme.²⁴

The reason of the state, therefore, should not reduce it, as Migdal shows, into an undifferentiated entity pulling towards a single direction. Doing so is reifying and anthropomorphizing the state hence obscuring the dynamics and patterns of the struggles in which

²² In other words, a gate-keeper state, to use the language of Frederik Cooper, cannot wholly ascertain its independence from its financial source. See his *Africa since 1940: The Past of the Present*, Cambridge: CUP, 2002, pp. 156-161

²³ Naomi Chazan, "Patterns of State Society Incorporation and Disengagement in Africa," in Donald S Rothchild and Naomi Chazan (eds), *The Precarious Balance: State and Society in Africa*, Boulder: Westview Press, 1988, p. 123.

²⁴ See Leander Schneider, *Government of Development: Peasants and Politicians in Postcolonial Tanzania*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014.

it is caught. Migdal suggests a 'state in society' approach that should see the state from below while acknowledging how various components, "often impelled by conflicting interests and pulling in different directions relate to one another."²⁵ What Migdal overlooks, however, is the role of other actors and or forces outside national politics. Nevertheless, his work points to the need for analysts to examine statecraft as a process, one that is defined by a web of relationships in which multiple actors play their roles which are sometimes conflicting.

It is this kind of analysis that guided Berman's *Control and Crisis in Colonial Kenya*. His work showed that the colonial state in British Kenya remained semi-autonomous. While retaining its autonomy from capital and African society, the state also had strong metropolitan ties. Again, while its connections with the metropole made it strong, the state was weak because of inadequate personnel. Many of the African allies colonial Kenya relied on would sometimes help to overrule its decisions. Contradictory objectives also characterized statecraft there in that even though the state sought to support capital for the economic independence of Kenya, there were limits to which it would pass labour and land policies subjecting the peasantry to capitalist interests. In fact, following the Great Depression and the subsequent collapse of settler agriculture in the early 1930s, the state switched towards supporting African agriculture. Moreover, the state bureaucracy in colonial Kenya was neither monolithic nor uniform. The interests of the prefectural leadership were often at variance with those of technical administrators, just like the metropolitan interests sometimes deviated from those of the officers on the ground. In brief, a dialectic process defined statecraft in colonial Kenya, leading to the articulation of several goals, interests, and objectives.²⁶ When

²⁵ Joel S. Migdal, *State in Society: Studying How States and Societies Transform and Constitute One Another*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 115-116.

²⁶ See Bruce J. Berman, *Control & Crisis in Colonial Kenya: The Dialectic of Domination*, London: James Currey, 1990. For a later work articulating

we analyze Malawi's development history through the lens of such a state as the subsequent sections illustrate, the results could be fundamentally different from what the existing literature displays.

The Contested Gwelo Plan

I'm sick of experts, I am. They come here with their minds already made up, and they write a report not based on facts ... but just what they think should be. I feel sick that people sitting in the offices, either in London, or Washington or elsewhere, civil servants who just sit down and lecture at Oxford who say this is uneconomic, it makes me really sick! I was furious when I read that British Economic Mission supplement. When I see that man again [Hill], I mean the man who was chairman [of ODM's Economic Mission to Malawi] He had better not come here again. Nonsense! In fact, [he] did not even write a report based on facts.²⁷

While not trivializing the agency of the white expatriate staff the country retained following independence from Britain in 1964, Dr. Banda took overall leadership of the development direction of the country. Taking advantage of the parliamentary vote of confidence in him after the 1964 Cabinet crisis, Banda sought to push through the developmental aspect of the plan he had envisioned while in Gwelo Prison (March 1959-April 1960) in Southern Rhodesia.²⁸ The other

Berman's ideas (and even those of his colleague, John Lonsdale) see Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale, *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya & Africa*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1992. In his *Triumph of the Expert* Hodge too has noted a similar level of paralysis among experts, administrators, and the colonial office during the post-war development drive. See Joseph Morgan Hodge, *Triumph of the Expert: Agrarian Doctrines of Development and the Legacies of British Colonialism*, Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2007.

²⁷ H.K. Banda speech, 1 February 1966, The British National Archive (Hereafter TNA) DO 208-1. Statements, Messages and Speeches of Dr Banda of Malawi.

²⁸ The "Cabinet Crisis" took place in September 1964 following disagreements between Dr Hastings Banda, the then Prime Minister and some of his ministers. These differed mostly on domestic and foreign policies. Consequently, Dr Banda fired his three Cabinet Ministers forcing three others, including Henry Masauko Chipembere, to resign in solidarity with their colleagues. See Colin Baker, *Revolt of the Ministers: The Malawi Cabinet Crisis, 1964-1965*, London:

component of his dream sought to dissolve the Central African Federation, an assignment that he accomplished in 1963. Construction of the lake-shore road and the Nacala railway link connecting land-locked Malawi to the Indian Ocean in Mozambique, and moving the capital from Zomba to Lilongwe, ranked among the significant aspects of his development dream. Another important aspect was the construction of the new campus of the University of Malawi in Zomba.

At independence, however, Malawi did not have resources with which to embark on these large-scale projects. The task fell to Banda who looked to outside financiers, most of whom did not share in the development nature of some of these projects. Both the ODM and the World Bank, for instance, were critical of Banda's ambitions concerning the new capital and Nacala projects. Absorbing most of the functions previously managed by the Colonial Office, the ODM became a significant ministry through which Britain channeled much of her aid to former colonies or protectorates and other parts of the world. Between 1964 and 1977, Her Majesty's Government (HMG) was the largest financier for Malawi, with the World Bank taking the second place.²⁹ Before the Conservative Government established the Overseas Development Administration (ODA) in 1970, it was the ODM that engaged Malawi in financial negotiations. In 1965, the ODM deployed an Economic Mission to the country to investigate its economic status with the view of determining areas that required British financial support. The ODM also tasked the Mission to comment on the feasibility of the move of the capital following the £11 million application Malawi had raised requesting financial support from HMG.³⁰

I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2001. For a critique of Baker's work see John McCracken, "'Setting the Record Straight'? Transition in Colonial Malawi," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 3, 2003, pp. 791-793.

²⁹ See Kathryn Morton, *Aid and Dependence: British Aid to Malawi*, London: Croom Helm, 1975, pp. 1-10.

³⁰ Newspaper Cutting: *The Observer*, 16 October 1966, TNA/DO 208/3.

Led by C. de N. Hill, formerly Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance in Tanzania, and at the time Deputy Bursar, Sussex University, the mission produced a report critical of the two projects highlighted above. As expected, the ODM presented a report which triggered Banda's response cited in the epigraph above. It argued that "it would be economically and administratively absurd to build a new capital from scratch on a barren site eight miles outside the existing township of Lilongwe."³¹ Moreover, the two projects would not yield immediate benefits for the economy. On the contrary, they would divert resources away from other productive areas. Banda, however, argued for the economic benefits of the projects, noting how the transfer of capital to a central point would contribute to the fair distribution of development projects across the country. In his 1965 speech in Parliament, he impressed upon parliamentarians to support the project by appealing to the language of development. "This scheme of moving the capital," he stated, "is worth carrying out even if we haven't got £20 million...it will extend development, real development, practical development, not theoretical development of people sitting in the universities talking about census and statistics. Development of the common farmers in this country is needed."³² Again, Banda saw the Nacala rail link servicing the yet to be established Viphya Pulp Mill in the north, a project that died at the proposal stage.³³ Such justifications, however, did not influence both the ODM and the WB's position. As a result, Banda turned to the apartheid government in South Africa, a politically sensitive decision, at least as the British and other players saw it.

³¹ Extract from C. de N. Hill, *Economic Mission to Malawi Report*, 1965, TNA DO 183/839.

³² Excerpt of H. K. Banda speech, July 1965, H. K. Banda Archive (Indiana University Library), Box 6, folder 14.

³³ H. K. Banda speech, 1 February 1966, TNA DO 208/1. See also Banda's speech during the opening of Nacala Rail Link, 4 July 1970, H. K. Banda Archive, Box 2, file 3, Indiana University Library.

Sensing Banda's intentions to source funding from South Africa, which he eventually did, the ODM became extremely anxious about the possible implications his actions would have on British aid to Malawi. Whilst British policy on aid did not dictate on sovereign countries the potential sources of funding, the ODM's opinion was that Banda should be prevented from getting aid there even if it meant using aid as a political lever.³⁴ During the 1966 Malawi-ODM financial talks in London, ODM officials tabled the objection the Minister of Overseas Development, Barbara Castle, had raised with Dr Banda the previous year. "I feel I must point out to you quite frankly that if financial and other resources are to be devoted during this period to the move of the capital, which can only be done at the expense of more immediately productive investment which would more quickly reduce the need for external budgetary aid, this would make it increasingly difficult for the British Government to justify to the public opinion in this country continuing aid to Malawi on the scale we have now proposed."³⁵ A year later, that position had not changed. "While these decisions [about the move of capital] are for Malawi Government to decide," stated the chair in his opening speech, "they might lead us into a situation in which we should reluctantly have to reconsider justification for devoting so much aid to Malawi."³⁶

Banda questioned the ODM's intention to use the capital project to dictate the outcome of the discussions. "I am shocked," he wrote to the Minister of Overseas Development, "to hear that you or your officials are raising [the] question of our decision to move [the] capital in present financial talks."³⁷ Similar levels of criticism from other quarters might have contributed to the harsh tone in Banda's

³⁴ Memo: Anthony Greenwood (Minister of Overseas Development), 26 July 1966, TNA DO 208/3.

³⁵ Castle to Banda, 17 December 1965, TNA DO 208/3.

³⁶ Record of the financial meeting, 8 November 1966, TNA DO/208/10.

³⁷ Banda to Arthur Bottomley (Minister of Overseas Development), 1966, TNA DO 208/10.

pronouncements. In 1966 the United States Department of State warned Banda's ambassador in New York against receiving aid from South Africa for the move of the capital. Among others, the State Department saw such a decision as unpopular and one that would not win the support of both the Organization of African Unity (OAU) member states and liberal opinion both in the United States and Britain.³⁸ Banda did not hide his frustration, noting that "this hypocrisy was unnecessary" because USA and Britain had significant relations with South Africa and yet they prevented the small states from doing the same.³⁹ While keeping the South African card a top secret hoping Britain would change her position, such pressure further pushed Banda towards apartheid South Africa as an exit option.

It was evident in some quarters in London that the ODM would not stop Banda's ambitions to move the capital; more so because, in the wake of the Cabinet Crisis, political factors were as much important as economic motives. Notable among these included M.M.M. McMullen, a member of the Commonwealth Relations Office. He questioned ODM's insensitivity to the political context in its contrary position on transferring the capital. It was necessary to transfer the capital to Lilongwe in the centre far from the south, the political bedrock of Chipembere and where Banda enjoyed little political support. For him, the shock of the ministers' revolt triggered the urgent transfer of the capital to a safe base among his people. Efforts at preventing Banda from implementing such a critical project would only meet with intense opposition and reduce Britain into a neo-colonial power bent on dictating the domestic affairs of her former colonies. He argued that the Hill report should not have discussed this contentious issue.⁴⁰ McMullen was not alone

³⁸ Dispatch: British High Commissioner (Zomba) to Commonwealth Office (London), 29 August 1966, TNA DO 208/3.

³⁹ Record of Banda's personal communication with the American Ambassador to Malawi, 29 August 1966, TNA DO 208/3.

⁴⁰ Memo: M.M. McMullen, 4 February 1965, TNA DO 183/839.

in his support of the move of the capital. Many of Banda's conservative sympathizers in London supported his ambitious project. Notable among these were Duncan Sandys (a former Colonial and Commonwealth Secretary), and Nigel Fisher (former Under Secretary for Colonies), both serving, at the time, as Conservative Members of Parliament in the House of Commons. These viewed ODM's position as unfortunate given that Banda was friends with "capitalist" Britain.⁴¹

It is not clear whether political motives were a significant factor in Banda's decision. However, in his interview with Richard Kettlewell later in the mid-1980s, Peter Youens, the then Secretary to the Prime Minister and Cabinet in Malawi (1964-1966), narrated the disturbances that rocked Zomba for ten days during the Cabinet Crisis. In a show of solidarity with Chipembere, the civil servants and the crowd at the market threatened to burn down Banda's house. It took Secretary Youens to contain the group, almost risking his own life.⁴² Elsewhere, Deborah Kaspin has hinted on how the transfer of the capital was a gift to the Chewa ethnic group in the Centre.⁴³

Whatever the motive, external opposition to Banda's policies never ceased. Throughout the 1960s, the World Bank raised similar concerns. It criticized the Malawi Government for its poor economic policies, particularly the decision to move the capital, construction of the Nacala railway link, and inappropriate use of foreign exchange reserves. During the 1968 discussion with the minister of finance, Mr John Tembo, the African Department of the World Bank blamed the country's weak public sector financial position on bad projects. Anxious to know what these 'bad projects' were, the World Bank officials reminded Tembo of their previous effort at constraining Malawi from implementing wasteful projects. They singled out

⁴¹ Newspaper Cutting: *The Observer*, 16 October 1966, NAT DO 208/3.

⁴² Peter Youens' interview with Kettlewell, 9 Feb 1985, Oxford Bodleian Library of Commonwealth and African Studies (OBLCAS) MSS.Afr.s. 1742 (38).

⁴³ Deborah Kaspin, "The Politics of Ethnicity in Malawi's Democratic Transition," *Journal of Modern African Studies*, Vol. 33, No. 4, (1995), p. 605.

the projects highlighted above as straining the economy. Since plans on these projects were already at an advanced stage, the officials noted that there was little point in criticizing Banda. "But the fact remains that as a result of government policies, Malawi's financial prospects are so bad *to warrant further provisions of bank loans*. When the situation improves, the Bank will consider further operations [Italics added]."⁴⁴

The WB/IDA never relented in criticizing the country's development policy. Its position was clear in a leaked memo the Malawi Embassy at the UN accessed in 1969. In their discussions, WB officials criticized Malawi's traditional projects cited above—Nacala, transfer of capital and others. They added to that list the country's quest to construct yet another Hydroelectric Power Station at Tedzani when it already had one at Nkula (both along the Shire River in the South). They also questioned the Farmers Marketing Board for drawing bank overdrafts to finance its activities. Reiterating their earlier position on Nacala, the WB officials doubted the capacity of the line to generate enough revenue to pay back the South African loan. "If the railway cannot pay," read the leaked minute, "then the Government will be responsible for the debt [thereby denying resources to other essential areas of the economy]."⁴⁵ In his covering letter, the Malawi Ambassador to the UN captured better the feeling at the Bank. "I am also informed that the officials of the Bank/IDA are generally very concerned with the amount of loans Malawi has received and those that are still in the pipe-line. They say that they may have no say in the procurement of those loans that Malawi is getting from other sources, but the feeling in the Bank/IDA circles

⁴⁴ Record of the meeting, 5 October 1968, World Bank Archive (Hereafter WBA), File No. 1860298, Malawi General Negotiation Correspondence, Vol. 2.

⁴⁵ The leaked document is cited verbatim in a memo from N.W. Mbekeani (Malawi's UN Ambassador, New York) to J. Kachingwe (Acting Secretary for External Affairs, Lilongwe), 7 February 1969, MNA 11-11-5F/39566.

is that in the end Malawi may find that she is biting more than she can chew."⁴⁶

When the leaked memo reached Dr. Banda's desk, it returned with a minute equally revealing about Malawi's attitude towards IDA. In paraphrasing it, the Acting Secretary for Foreign Affairs advised his colleague in New York: "H.E's comment was that I should inform you [Mbekeani] to ignore what IDA tells you. The truth, as is known to Malawi, is that the African section of the Bank is under the charge of an Arab who, for obvious reasons, is not in our favour."⁴⁷ In essence, Banda questioned the very image of a Bank that boasted a status of being apolitical, resenting its paternalism every time an opportunity presented itself.

One came earlier in 1967. The World Bank Mission to Malawi questioned Malawi's overall failure to maintain appropriate foreign exchange reserves and borrow in local currency from commercial banks.⁴⁸ In his letter to Banda, the World Bank Vice-president warned Malawi against the tendency to draw on foreign currency deposits for purchases abroad following the non-availability of outside finance.⁴⁹ Banda coined his response in the language of political sovereignty that deserves citing at length here. "The whole business," he argued, "is, in fact, a vicious circle. As you know, we were a colony for seventy years [yet] with no economic or industrial development to [show off]. As a country, we feel we are the best judges of what is to be done [sic], what projects are to be or should be undertaken to accelerate economic and industrial development.... We reserve the right to reject any suggestion or any proposal with which we do not agree.... We are not prepared to accept any loan from anyone if that loan is

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Kachingwe to Mbekeani, 18 February 1969, MNA 11-11-5F/39566.

⁴⁸ A substantive discussion of the 1967/68 foreign exchange challenges in Malawi is presented in a Confidential Memo No 1, General Economic Situation, 1968, MNA 6-6-4F/17864.

⁴⁹ John Burke Knapp to H.K. Banda, 23 August 1967, WBA, General Negotiations, File No. 1860298.

ted to unfair and humiliating conditions."⁵⁰ When Knapp briefed the president of the World Bank on Banda's concerns, George Woods suggested that the World Bank slow down its operations in the country, a piece of advice which, as noted above, had undoubtedly influenced the bank officials.

In 1975, Morton argued that British aid to Malawi had positive results, noting how it sustained the country's economic growth in the 1970s without substituting its development strategy. She attributed this to the checks and balances the British provided which helped in the successful utilization of development aid.⁵¹ What Morton overlooked, however, was that the same checks and balances threatened Malawi's autonomy and forced its leadership to adopt development policies that would help to arrest outside interference. Again, while foreign aid did not substitute the country's development strategy as Morton rightly contended, the selective manner in which it was presented closed and opened certain options.

For a state under constant pressure to achieve real sovereignty, a shift to predatory economic policies discussed in the literature above becomes less surprising. Large-scale agricultural estates, under the control of a few elites specializing in tobacco production and enjoying state-guaranteed loans, for instance, represented one of the ways out of that pressure. It was not a preconceived state plan aimed at perpetuating the colonial tradition. Deliberate support to such a sector became necessary because it would quickly generate the sought-after foreign exchange rather than relying on the patronizing British and other Western aid agencies. It is worth emphasizing that

⁵⁰ Banda to Knapp, 27 September 1967, WBA, File No. 1860298.

⁵¹ Kathryn Morton, *Aid and Dependence*, 1975, pp. 164-174. A year later, Leon Gordenker presented an opposite view. She argued that the International Aid Organisations had a limited effect on Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania in the sense that the national governments always prevailed each time officials from these organizations challenged domestic decisions. See her *International Aid and National Decisions: Development Programs in Malawi, Tanzania, and Zambia*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

such policies were mostly an outcome of contestations emerging in the early years of independence when different international actors with economic power often crashed with local bureaucrats and politicians. The latter saw such interventions as a threat to real political sovereignty. This view becomes far clearer through an analysis of the state's development objectives, an exercise that requires a return to the development instruments introduced in the earlier section.

The Struggle over Development Planning

One aspect that should help us understand these dynamics borders on what the post-colonial state planned to achieve and how other actors contested that planning. The 1961 MCP Manifesto, the 1962-65 and 1965-1969 Development Plans, and the 1971 Statement of Development Policies, are a good starting point. Useful as they are, however, these instruments have their problems and need a thorough interrogation. While the MCP Manifesto of 1961 laid down the objectives of the nationalist movement in various areas, such issues could well have been exaggerated to prove to the African masses about the goodwill of the African-controlled government. However, pitched against the previous economic disparities between the white settlers and Africans, the manifesto detailed how the MCP government sought to correct that anomaly. The 1962-1965 Development Plan, even though raised after the 1961 General Elections, was, in fact, a Federal government document. Moreover, by the time it expired, the MCP-led government had framed the 1965-1969 plan which it advertently dropped in 1967. The government argued that formal planning was unnecessary for a country such as Malawi.⁵² Although planned during the period of intense African opposition to the federal government, the 1962-65 plan presents the economic aspirations of African nationalists.⁵³

⁵² I will return to these issues later in this discussion. See also Memo: K. J. Barnes (Secretary to the Treasury), 8 April 1970, MNA 1-8-9R/17839.

⁵³ See footnote number 6 above.

Between 1967 and the early 1970s, the country did not have any formal development plan other than what it called a three year-rolling programme that was revised annually, depending on the availability of development resources.⁵⁴ It is from the initial drafts of the Statement of Development Policies, preparations for which began in 1970, that we get a comprehensive discussion of the country's plans for development. The introductory chapter drafted by D.S. Pearson (the Chief Economist), resonates well with what the previous frameworks spelled out. "Malawi's basic development strategy" reads the draft, "may be summed up in the phrase 'grass-roots development,'" further arguing that even though the country did not rule out implementing large-scale projects, it would only do so hoping they would raise "material welfare [of] the population at large."⁵⁵

This approach to development ruled out what Pearson called the "Big Push" development programme according to which planners concentrated resources in a few capital-intensive projects. These projects would take the form of mechanized agricultural estates. For Pearson, while rewarding in terms of their capacity to raise a country's GDP, such projects left out much of the population and would therefore not arrest poverty.⁵⁶ It is therefore not surprising that while promoting some selected capitalist projects, several other large-scale projects of the early post-colonial period targeted rural farmers.⁵⁷

Pearson's views on rural-urban disparities deserve citing at length.

⁵⁴ Memo: R.B.S. Burdy (for Secretary of the President and Cabinet), 2 June 1970, MNA 1-8-9R/17839.

⁵⁵ Draft Statement of Development Objectives, Circulated 7 October 1970, MNA 1-8-9R/17839. The final copy left out several of the initial ideas that circulated among the expatriate staff. See Malawi Government, *Statement of Development Policies, 1971-1980*, Zomba: Government Printer, 1971.

⁵⁶ Draft Statement of Development Objectives.

⁵⁷ These included the Lilongwe Land Development Project; the Shire Valley Cotton Project; The Lake-Shore Development Project, and several other Rice Schemes mostly under the support of the Republic of China (Taiwan).

The distribution of income between urban and rural areas is an important factor in Malawi's income and prices policy. It would be contrary to this broad policy to create a privileged position for urban wage earners by artificially inflating their incomes since this would be reflected in increased prices of manufactured goods and cause a reduction in the real price of farmers. Not only would this be contrary to the objectives of raising the living standards of the mass of the population but would also act as a disincentive to increase effort in the agricultural sector and hence undermine the basic development strategy.... These policies have been followed since independence.⁵⁸

Earlier in 1968, Pearson struggled to defend what he saw as a development policy that all government officials shared. He was critical of the Farmers Marketing Board (FMB) decision to reduce the producer price for rural farmers, through more stringent grading procedures. In his opinion, such a deflationary policy was unnecessary as it affected the agricultural sector upon which the majority of the population relied.⁵⁹ What Pearson overlooked, however, was the intense financial pressure the government faced, coming in the wake of reduced aid from both the British and the World Bank whose context I describe above.⁶⁰ The solution to this pressure pitted bureaucrats against each other, with the FMB rejecting Pearson's claims and describing his memo as "scandalous, dangerous, critical, malicious, and contemptuous piece of work...with a bad motive."⁶¹ More revealing in Pearson's memo is a reference to the 'political projects'—preliminary work on the capital, Nacala and the Sanjika Palace—that Banda pursued. Pearson saw the projects as straining the otherwise weak economy.

⁵⁸ Draft Statement of Development Objectives, Circulated 7 October 1970, MNA 1-8-9R/17839.

⁵⁹ Memo: Pearson to Robert J. Dewar (Secretary of Economic Affairs), 27 June 1968, MNA 15-12-6R/15077.

⁶⁰ See also the Confidential Memorandum No. 1, MNA 6-6-4F/17864, 1968.

⁶¹ Memo: Richard (a member of the FMB) to Dewar, 2 July 1968, MNA 15-12-6R/15077.

While revealing much about the official mind of the state, the Statement of Development Policies was the outcome of the pressure the western aid actors exerted on local experts and politicians in Malawi. As early as 1968, various aid agencies faulted the country for abandoning formal development plans. For example, in 1969 the World Bank Mission to Malawi questioned Banda on the country's rejection of formal development planning. Instead, Banda argued against that kind of planning. "I realize," he wrote the President of the World Bank, Robert McNamara, "that at some stage there was a widespread belief that comprehensive development plans prepared in detail for a fixed term of years were a form of panacea ... to development. That idea is now outmoded."⁶² For Banda, the country did not just have resources of its own for any possible development projects but he emphasized the country's preference for the rolling development programme.

Banda's statements, reflected the general tenor in the state bureaucracy even though it is far from clear who might have influenced the other. Many of his white expatriate staff shared these ideas, and it is difficult to ignore the influence this group had over the overall direction of the country's economic landscape in the early years of independence.⁶³ One passage from the Chief Secretary's memos is illustrative. "It has been suggested from [several] sources that the Malawi Government should prepare some formal document, setting out its long-term development plan. Most of the views to this effect have been expressed by government and international agencies.... It

⁶² Banda to R. McNamara, 28 June 1969, WBA, File No. 1860299.

⁶³ Chitsamba's work stands among those that reject this view, often dismissing the agency of the white expatriate staff in the setting of the country's policy direction. See Lemson S. Chitsamba, "Malawi and the Politics of Foreign Aid," PhD, The London School of Economics and Political Science, University of London, 1990. Jonathan Kydd reluctantly accepted this view which D.H. Humphrey and T.D. Williams earlier advanced in their separate works. See Kydd, "Malawi in the 1970s," p. 304; David H. Humphrey, "Malawi's Economic Progress and Prospects," pp. 71-104; T.D. Williams, *Malawi: The Politics of Despair*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978.

would appear desirable for Malawi Government to state categorically that it does not accept the validity of the argument that national prosperity and rapid economic growth depend upon detailed prints of long-term economic planning, tailored to fit into academic theories."⁶⁴

Earlier on April 4, 1970, the IMF Consultative Mission to Malawi challenged the expatriate staff to reconsider its decision, arguing that a development plan would strengthen Malawi's ability to negotiate foreign financing for her projects.⁶⁵ In March 1970, the World Bank advisor on planning organization (Development Service Department) requested the Malawi Government to submit its development plan, stating that Malawi was the only country without one out of a list of seventy. During the 1970 Malawi-London financial discussions, the ODM expressed a similar opinion, noting that Malawi would have been most successful in attracting aid had it possessed clear plans of what it sought to achieve.⁶⁶ With time, Barnes listened to the voice of reason and encouraged his expatriate colleagues to move towards formal planning.⁶⁷ Even with that, he did not believe a formal development plan of the type produced by other countries would be in any way useful. He saw it as more necessary for soliciting aid than anything else.

By September 1970, the drafting of the Statement of Development Policies covering the years 1971-1980 had commenced. It targeted seven significant areas.⁶⁸ Even with that, outside pressure,

⁶⁴ Memo: B.C Roberts, 17 April 1970, MNA 1-8-9R/17839, National Development Plan, Dev/10/5/Vol. I.

⁶⁵ IMF Report on Malawi, 1970, MNA 1-8-9R/17839.

⁶⁶ See Memo: K.J. Barnes (Secretary to the Treasury), 8 April 1970, MNA 1-8-9R/17839.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ These included the Statement of Development Objectives, Manufacturing, Export Projections, Agricultural Policy, Human Resources and Social Services, Distribution of Transport, and finally, Progress to Date. See Memo: D.S. Pearson, 4 September 1970, MNA 1-8-9R/17839.

notably from the UNDP, never ceased. The UNDP did not consider the proposed document a plan worth the name.⁶⁹ It expressed that opinion in the 1971 Background Paper on Malawi by its Resident Representative.⁷⁰ That paper criticized the country's casual approach to development and condemned it for abolishing, in 1967, the Ministry of Development and Planning. Set up in 1965, that ministry aimed at coordinating development activities in the country. When the state dropped formal development plans, the ministry was rendered less useful. In commenting on the Background Paper, the Development Division of the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) trashed it for its "inaccuracies and misconceptions," further emphasizing "any suggestion of resuscitating the old Ministry of Development and Planning should be shot down at once: it was an unmitigated failure [sic]." The comment on raising a formal development plan other than the one already attempted is illustrative: "Such a plan," argued the Secretary to the OPC, "would not make the slightest difference to 'determine and maintaining priorities.' [sic]. It would simply make necessary changes more difficult to achieve and create inflexibility in the planning process."⁷¹

For the UNDP Resident Representative, failure to plan was a sign of a state with bureaucrats lacking the capacity to channel the country towards real planned development. The OPC captured that mood better: "[This Background Paper] does give the impression that we are a pretty lame duck, that there isn't much hope for us, but probably, we will be able to jog along at a fairly impoverished level and not to be a bother to anyone else. [We must resist these assumptions]."⁷² Mostly, the UNDP saw such failures not only crippling the

⁶⁹ That opinion was equally true for state bureaucrats who never intended it to take the shape of the standard development plans familiar to Western experts.

⁷⁰ See UNDP Background Paper on Malawi, March 1971, MNA 4-14-1F/33764.

⁷¹ R.B.S. Purdy (for Secretary to the President and Cabinet) to Secretary to the Treasury, October 23, 1971, MNA 4-14-1F/33764.

⁷² Ibid.

government's activities but also stalling its development effort in Malawi.⁷³ Such sentiments often attracted responses that implicitly reminded the UNDP about the country's sovereignty. "One agency [the UNDP]," complained the Secretary to the Treasury, "is sufficiently honest to acknowledge that a formal development plan would facilitate its own work (as though the governments of developing countries were for the convenience of the UN agencies) [sic]. Others feel that they have the jurisdiction and competence to dictate policy to a member government."⁷⁴

It is this kind of antagonism that characterized the developmental state throughout the early period of independence. Malawi objected to the idea that Duffield and Hewitt have more recently described as a "paternalistic and educative design of power" because it defied a positive interaction among what the state in Malawi saw as seemingly equal actors.⁷⁵ It did so either at the highest level of governance or technocratic decision-making level. The limits of that effort became clear after 1983 when the IMF and the World Bank entirely dictated the economic course of the country through the Structural Adjustment Programmes.

Conclusion

The introductory section of this chapter raised questions to which I now return as I conclude this discussion. To what extent was the early post-colonial state in Malawi autonomous? Did it by design seek to perpetuate the colonial tradition of exploitation, reducing itself into a leviathan state? While the structure of Malawi's economy in the 1970s resembled that of the colonial state, scholars need to take great care in drawing a simplistic continuity between the colonial and post-colonial economic traditions. Evidence in this area is elusive, more so

⁷³ UNDP Background Paper on Malawi, 1971, MNA 4-14-1F/33764.

⁷⁴ Memo by S.W. Foot, April 26, 1972, MNA 4-14-1F/33764.

⁷⁵ Mark Duffield and Vernon Hewitt, "Introduction," in Mark Duffield and Vernon Hewitt (eds), *Empire, Development and Colonialism: The Past in the Present*, London: James Currey, 2013, p. 12.

because the existing development instruments of that period do not sustain the concept of a predatory state. Such policies emerged later and following the intense pressure the international aid agencies and the British Government exerted on Malawi. Armed with technical expertise and or power, these experts had distinct ideas about the country's development and saw some selected projects in Malawi as wasteful. Had John McCracken lived longer, he would well have plotted his theme of experts and expertise in colonial Malawi on the post-colonial economic landscape.⁷⁶ The major difference would probably have been that while the colonial experts achieved little success, the many international experts proved influential in post-colonial Malawi, pushing the state towards policies it never envisaged. It is worth emphasizing that the post-colonial state in Malawi was not an undifferentiated entity. Several voices spoke different languages which proved irreconcilable. A compromise which emerged gave rise to exploitative policies the government least expected under the new political dispensation. By studying this crucible of interactions taking place between 1964 and 1983 we get a sense of the economic trajectory of the country after independence. That economic course displays a shared history of the nation in which different actors contributed to both its successes and failures.

⁷⁶ John McCracken, "Experts and Expertise in Colonial Malawi," *African Affairs*, Vol. 8, No. 332, Jan. 1982, pp. 101-116.

Pastors, Priests, Prophets: Poverty and Christian Religion in Malawi 1861 to 2019

John Chipembere Lwanda

Introduction

Some scholars have argued that poverty has been a feature of the Malawi landscape from the early colonial period. Aspects of this poverty have been studied from historical, economic, social and other perspectives but comparatively less so from perspectives that highlight missionary and religious clergy agency. Building on work by John McCracken,¹ Jack Thompson,² Andrew Ross,³ Joseph Chakanza⁴ and more recent scholarship, this paper examines the dynamics between the agency of Christian missionaries and clergy in positions of leadership and poverty in Malawi between 1861 and 2018. The aim is to examine the way in which the two variables, clergy agency and poverty, have interacted and impacted on each other, using transitional periods as exemplars, in Malawi history. This is done by looking at how pastors, priests and prophets have addressed issues of poverty at these times, highlighting successes and failures. The idea is to see if the clergy have been a significant part of agencies that fight

¹ Cf. John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875 -1940*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.

² Cf. T. Jack Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi: Donald Fraser's Missionary Methods and Ngoni Culture*. Leiden: Brill, 1995.

³ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*. Zomba: Kachere, 1996 and A.C. Ross, "Forty-Five Years of Turmoil: Malawi Christian Churches, 1949–1994," *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, Vol. 18, Issue 2, 1994, pp. 53 – 60.

⁴ Cf. Joseph Chakanza, *Voices of Preachers in Protest. The Ministry of two Malawian Prophets; Elliot Kamwana and Wilfrid Gudu*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 1998; and Joseph Chakanza and Kenneth R. Ross, *Religion in Malawi: an Annotated Bibliography*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 1998.

poverty or if some of their activities have contributed to worsening poverty in Malawi.

A quote attributed to Temitope Balogun Joshua, the Nigerian preacher, was a formative factor for this essay.

Nigeria's controversial prophet and founder of the Synagogue Church of All Nations (SCOAN), T.B. Joshua, has reportedly claimed that "fake" pastors and prophets "are worsening poverty levels in Malawi."..⁵

T.B. Joshua attracts visitors from Malawi; many of them who can barely afford the airfares flock to him in search of miracles from disease and poverty. The growing quest for miracles and immediate, rather than long-term solutions, 'Christian' or otherwise, struck me as requiring some study.⁶

The phrase 'Pastors, Priests and Prophets' (PPPs) is meant to designate the various clergy members of Christian churches as a collective group. Where a specific denomination is discussed, for example 'priest' for Catholic or Anglican, 'pastor' for Baptist, this is specified.⁷ Agency here, given the context, is, after Ahern (2001), defined as 'the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act'.⁸ This definition reminds us that agency can be 'oppositional', 'complicit', 'intentional', 'powerful', or indeed, 'complex and ambiguous'.⁹

The definition of poverty used is, for the colonial period, a historically stated poverty.

⁵ T.B. Joshua. "Fake Prophets, Pastors Worsening Poverty Levels in Malawi," www.news24.com/Africa/News/tb-joshua-fake-prophets-pastors-worsening-poverty-levels-in-malawi-20170110, [12.2.2018].

⁶ Cf. Bright Mhango, 'Are Pentecostal Churches Phony?' *Nation Online*, <https://mwnation.com/are-pentecostal-churches-phony>, [21.7.2018]. Mhango uses 'Pentecostals' instead of 'Charismatics.'

⁷ 'Prophets' and 'Apostles' (PPs) being commonly used for the newer Pentecostal and Evangelical churches and ministries.

⁸ Laura M. Ahern, "Language and Agency," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 2001, 30, pp. 109 – 137, at p. 112.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 130–131.

In the 2018 Malawi context, extreme poverty is defined as the inability to meet basic minimum food requirements based on the monthly cost of a 'constructed ideal' food basket.¹⁰ Based on this, in 2016, 71% of Malawians were reported as living in extreme poverty.¹¹ In neighbouring Zambia, 58% were living in poverty, as defined by the World Bank, in 2015; Zimbabwe, 22% and Tanzania, 60%.¹² Comparative figures for Malawi were similar to the 'food basket' model at 70% in 2016.¹³

It is difficult to pinpoint when "modern measurable poverty" historically begins in Malawi. We could argue that it was when the colonizing process progressed and a 'modern' cash economy, compounded by taxation (hut and poll taxes) replaced previous economic models and land was expropriated from some indigenous people that areas of deprivation resulted. Further, as the previous models of shifting cultivation, hunting and foraging became constrained by settlement, growth of estates and government rules and the colonial government neglected African cash crop development while encouraging migration to South Africa and Southern Rhodesia, some families, devoid of previous coping strategies, fell into poverty.¹⁴ Extended family networks, which provide culturally-

¹⁰ Cf. Centre for Social Concern's Reports, www.cfscmalawi.org/pub_month.html, [8.5.2018]

¹¹ Grace Phiri, "Poverty Levels Extreme in Malawi," *Nation Online*, <http://mwnation.com/poverty-levels-extreme-in-malawi-unctad>, [3.2.2018].

¹² World Bank. *Poverty and Equity Portal*, <http://povertydata.worldbank.org/poverty/country/ZMB>, [23.5.2019].

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Cf. Frederick Pryor, *The Political Economy of Poverty, Equity and Growth: Malawi and Madagascar*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990, pp. 21–32; Leroy Vail, "Making of an Imperial Slum: Nyasaland and her Railways, 1895 - 1935," *Journal of Africa History*, Vol. 16, 1975, pp. 89–112; Leroy Vail, "Railway Development and Colonial Underdevelopment: the Nyasaland Case," in Robin Palmer and Neil Parsons (eds), *Roots of Rural Poverty in Central and Southern Africa*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977; and Elias Mandala, "Feeding and Fleecing the Native: How the Nyasaland Transport System

based 'poverty safety nets' have, to date, survived colonial and post-colonial changes.

Religion and the Economy

In general, both John McCracken's *Politics and Christianity in Malawi* and Jack Thompson's *Christianity in Northern Malawi* can be seen as suggesting a realization, partial or otherwise, of David Livingstone's 'Christianity and Commerce,' through education and ethical commerce. Andrew Ross' *Blantyre Mission* argues, perhaps too strongly, that products from Blantyre Mission were disproportionately influential in Malawi's development endeavours.

David Livingstone had appealed

I beg to direct your attention to Africa... I go back to Africa to make an open path for commerce and Christianity...¹⁵

Has Christianity been a cause of poverty or part of the solution to it in Nyasaland and Malawi? We will examine this question by looking at the activities of missionaries and Christian clergy at various periods since David Livingstone's time. The relevant periodization will be as follows: a) The early missionary period; b) The emergence of Independency and creation of Independent African Churches; c) the Federation and Independence; d) Post-Independence; and e) Malawi Christianity in the 21st century and onwards. In this essay we address bodily, as opposed to spiritual poverty, the poverty of hunger, lack of economic development.

The Early Missionary Period

However, if our first task is to see if the impact of missionaries led to significant poverty reduction, we need to know the historical baseline. Was there poverty in the Malawi territory between 1861 and 1910 as missionaries arrived? And what would have constituted poverty at the

Distorted a New Food Market, 1890s- 1920s," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 32, No. 3, 2006, pp. 505 -524.

¹⁵ William Monk (ed), *Dr. Livingstone's Cambridge Lectures*, 1860, p. 24.

time? Opinions vary. A 2015 review of Livingstone's papers by Rijpma suggested that his assessment of people's nutritional and health status was arguably harsher than the reality.¹⁶ Rijpma's assessment may be closer to Elias Mandala's conclusions for the Lower Shire for the same period.¹⁷ Given the period, its abundance of game, forestry and relative availability of land for farming and hunting, it is difficult to justify severe poverty for the 1861-1910 period. A re-reading of Harry Johnston's account does not suggest overwhelming poverty.¹⁸

The contrary view is supported by studies that point to poverty caused by human strife in the form of wars, migration, and slavery.¹⁹ And there was some poverty in the Malawi territory between 1861 and 1910 due to climate cycles. Oral history confirms the "fear of drought and famine" in this period and beyond²⁰ but missionary efforts were not significantly directed at its alleviation or on advocacy for its reduction.

There were ideological differences among the missionaries from the start. Compared to the other Protestant missionaries the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) and the Catholic missionaries were initially more interested in a 'gradual Christianization of the existing village

¹⁶ Sjoerd Rijpma, *David Livingstone and the Myth of African Poverty and Disease: A Close Examination of his Writing on the Pre-Colonial Era*, Leiden: Brill Publishers, 2015. See also Landeg White, *Magomero: Portrait of an African Village*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1989, pp. 1–70.

¹⁷ Elias Mandala, *The End of Chidyerano: A History of Food and Everyday Life in Malawi, 1860–2004*, Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann, 2005.

¹⁸ Harry Johnston, *British Central Africa*, New York: Edward Arnold, 1897.

¹⁹ Cf. Megan Vaughan, "Food Production and Family Labour in Southern Malawi: the Shire Highlands and Upper Shire Valley in the Early Colonial Period," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 1982, pp. 351–364.

²⁰ John McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859–1966*, Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012, pp. 7–10. See also J. Matthew Schoffeleers and Adrian A. Roscoe, *Land of Fire: Oral Literature from Malawi*, Lilongwe: Likuni Press, 1985, p. 10.

institutions.²¹ Both therefore privileged primary education for Africans, eschewing higher education. DRC missionaries, however, specifically emphasized and encouraged small scale rural development, with agriculture and small-scale agriculture-based industrial enterprises being promoted.²² With hindsight, could more of such small-scale initiatives have reduced the latter culture of 'dependency and consumption' that complicated Malawi's poverty? Delivering quality education and health was expensive and early missions were so financially dependent on their mother churches in Europe that they never shook off this dependency; this culture of donor dependency still continues among most Christian ministries.

All missionaries, except Jehovah's Witnesses, established schools and hospitals, and carried on their core work of spreading the gospel. If western education could be equated with 'civilization' and 'evangelization' with bringing in Christianity, then it will be argued that it is the introduction of 'commerce' by missionaries and their successors that has lagged behind from the very early stages. And if education is a key to 'commerce' then it can be argued that it has been a key that has not so far been fully utilized.

Certainly, education produced clerks and other civil servants for the colonial service. In the run up to the First World War many of the educated Africans ended up in the civil service or the Kings African Rifles.²³ Christian missions also produced educated workers for their own churches.

²¹ Rhodian Munyenembe, *Christianity and Socio-Cultural Issues: the Charismatic Movement and Contextualisation in Malawi*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2011, p. 18.

²² Bridglal Pachai, *History of the Nation*, London: Longman, 1973, p. 92. The argument as to whether universal primary and secondary education or more access to tertiary education is better for economic development and poverty reduction is of course still unresolved in the Malawi context.

²³ Cf. Melvin Page, *A History of the King's African Rifles and East African Forces*, London and Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 1998.

All accounts suggest that missionaries were more involved in education and health than agriculture during the early colonial period.²⁴ There are fewer reports of what commercial activities missionaries were advocating to replace the existing commerce of the period, including the slave trade. It is partly for this reason that some scholars question the ideological soundness of combining commerce and Christianity.²⁵

Independency and African Independent Churches/African Instituted Churches (AICs)

The next phase of Malawi Christianity saw some early African converts break away from their mother churches over differences on race, doctrine, culture, discipline and the restrictions imposed on African education and career opportunities within the church ministries.²⁶

Charles Domingo was one of the earliest to challenge 'European superiority' and objected to African ministers facing 'prolonged' supervision. In a strongly worded leaflet Domingo accused "all Europeans, missionaries, Government and Companies or gainers of money" of looking down upon natives with "mockery eyes."²⁷ Domingo was a preacher and teacher and there is little evidence that, from the time he fell out with Donald Fraser in 1908 to 1917, he promoted what could be classed as commercial activities. In fact, his missionary and educational work was constrained by the lack of external funding. Elliot Kamwana, though more radical than

²⁴ Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu, *Conservation Song: A History of Peasant-State Relations and the Environment in Malawi, 1860-2000*, Cambridge: The White Horse Press, 2011, p. 42.

²⁵ Brian Stanley, "Commerce and Christianity: Providence Theory, the Missionary Movement, and the Imperialism of Free Trade, 1842-1860," *Historical Journal*, Vol. 26, No. 1, 1983, pp. 71-94.

²⁶ Cf. Chakanza, *Voices of Preachers in Protest*.

²⁷ George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1958, pp. 162-164

Domingo was, on the available evidence, more pre-occupied with doctrinal matters than agricultural.²⁸ Although Domingo, Kamwana and John Chilembwe (see below) had at some point been influenced by the radical preacher Joseph Booth, only Chilembwe stands out as one who developed a holistic ministry with ideas of ‘Christianity, Commerce and Civilization’.²⁹

John Chilembwe ministered to both body and soul: promoting education, health and industry. He built schools, agitated for land rights and land expropriation, addressed issues of forced labour (*thangata*) and taxation and taught farming, instilled a sense of self-help and self-respect and hard work. His 1915 uprising, for all its shortcomings, has been hailed as a significant step in the fight for social and political justice. What distinguishes Chilembwe for our purposes is his fight for socio-economic rights. The Providence Industrial Mission (PIM) could be seen as a religious, social, economic and political statement of African self-sufficiency.

Dr Daniel Malekebu, Chilembwe’s successor as head of PIM, was of a similar ‘Tuskegeean’ persuasion,³⁰ an admirer of Booker T. Washington.³¹ He wanted a PIM where education, health, child welfare, agriculture and industry were taught, ensuring that John

²⁸ Ibid. See also McCracken, *Politics and Christianity* pp. 251–254. Robert Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism in Central Africa: the Making of Malawi and Zambia*, Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1966, pp. 66–69.

²⁹ For Chilembwe’s history see Shepperson and Price, *Independent African*, 1958; John McCracken (ed), *Voices from the Chilembwe Rising: Witness Testimonies Made to the Nyasaland Rising Commission of Inquiry, 1915*, London, Oxford University Press, 2015; and D.D. Phiri, *Let Us Die for Africa: an African Perspective on the Life and Death of John Chilembwe of Nyasaland*, Blantyre: Central Africana, 1999.

³⁰ See Patrick Makondesa, *The Church History of Providence Industrial Mission*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, pp. 90–99.

³¹ Cf. William L. Andrews (ed), *Booker T. Washington: Up From Slavery*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1996; and Louis. R. Harlan, *The Booker T. Washington Papers: The Making of a Black Leader New, 1856-1901*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1972.

Chilembwe's economic activism continued. Most African Independent Church Pastors and Prophets could be criticized for not following the Chilembwe or Malekebu Tuskegee model of self-development; however, some engaged in poverty alleviation initiatives by objecting to impoverishing unfair taxes. For example, Wilfrid Gudu, an AIC pastor active in the 1930s, was actively concerned with such issues as land alienation, the tenant system, overcrowding, internal migratory labour and low wages. He considered it part of his calling to counter the injustice that came with colonial rule.³² Although not as political as Chilembwe earlier, Gudu had, until he was thwarted by his native authority, taken steps to establish a farm commune.³³

Some separatist African churches rejected colonial rule churches, and preached self-determination; these included: Levi Mumba's African National Church (left Livingstonia Mission in 1929); Yafet Mkandawire's African Reformed Presbyterian Church (formed in 1932); Yesaya Zerenji Mwasi's Black Man's Church of God (formed in 1933); and Charles Chinula's Eklesia *Lanangwa*, formed in 1934.³⁴ These early independent PPPs showed leadership and engaged with the colonial authorities for political, doctrinal and social rights. But, with the notable exception of John Chilembwe, it could not be argued that their efforts were significant in promoting commerce or alleviating poverty.

The Federation and Independence

As the independent church leaders and native associations continued to fight for social and economic rights a number of observers have noted that there were distinct differences in the level of engagement and ideological orientation among different churches' clergy. A.C. Ross, using the Commission of Enquiry into the Chilembwe Rising as an example, points out that, "...it was only from the Scottish

³² Chakanza, *Voices of Preachers in Protest*.

³³ *Ibid*, pp. 84-90.

³⁴ Rotberg, *The Rise of Nationalism*, p. 150.

synods that Africans volunteered to give evidence to the commission... In contrast, the missionary witnesses from the Roman Catholic missions and from Mkhoma (sic) asserted that the Malawi people were content with the political situation."³⁵ On this point Ross is in agreement with Linden who observes, "... for [Catholic missionaries] the church [they produced in Malawi] was a replica of the one they had left behind in [Europe]; it was profoundly conservative and largely made up of peasants... it was a small but powerful brake on the development of political consciousness amongst its membership, for its political stance was always a tacit acceptance of the status quo..."³⁶ Ironically, despite Linden's astute observations above, he did not anticipate that the Malawi Catholic leadership would later free itself from its conservatism.³⁷

The fight against Federation involved a number of PPP actors from various native associations, like Rev Charles Chinula. But, according to Andrew C. Ross, "... as in the previous crises of 1928 and 1938, the Mkhoma (sic) Mission and the Roman Catholic missions played no part in lobbying the British authorities, and the African leadership within their churches were so [powerless] that they also said and did nothing..."³⁸ As the first African Catholic priests were only ordained in 1937,³⁹ Ross's argument is not as overstated as it first seems; Reijnaerts et al. confirm that "the coming of age of African clergy and religious" occurred later, between 1966 and 1996.⁴⁰ By then African Presbyterian and Anglican deacons, ministers and priests had been ordained decades earlier; and some had already had

³⁵ Ross, "Forty-Five Years of Turmoil," pp. 53-60.

³⁶ Ian Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance in Nyasaland 1889-1939*, London: Heinemann, 1974, p. 208.

³⁷ Linden was to note this change in 1992. See Catholic Institute for International Relations, *Malawi: A Moment of Truth*, London: CIIR, 1993.

³⁸ Ross, "Forty-Five Years of Turmoil" pp. 53-60.

³⁹ The first ordinands were Cornelio Chitsulo and Alfred Finye.

⁴⁰ Hubert Reijnaerts, Ann Nielsen and Matthew Schoffeleers, *Montfortians in Malawi: Their Spirituality and Pastoral Approach*, Blantyre: Kachere/CLAIM, 1997, pp. 381-403.

opportunity for dissent. This dissent was mostly doctrinal and for human rights equality rather than for commercial enterprises that would lead to self-sufficiency and poverty eradication.

The Blantyre Synod of the CCAP issued a "Statement on the Present State of Unrest" in 1958, an essentially 'anti-Federation as proposed' stance.⁴¹ The statement recognized that Nyasaland would become nothing but a labour reservoir for 'racist' Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, to the economic detriment of its people.

With self-government in sight, some Catholic laity and clergy, supported by Archbishop Theunissen of Blantyre Diocese, exercised their political muscles in 1960 by forming the Christian Democratic Party (CDP). Although the subsequent tussle between the Malawi Congress Party and the CDP cannot be considered as a direct poverty fighting initiative, it could be argued that a more democratic, less authoritarian, Malawi may have prioritized poverty alleviation.⁴² In the event, and partly due to the CDP affair, PPPs lost their political voice to the nationalist laity even before independence.

Clergy Voices after Independence

This loss of political voice, for all PPPs, was consolidated in the months after the Cabinet Crisis, establishing an MCP hegemony which effectively silenced dissident political, social, economic, cultural and religious voices in Malawi for another three decades.⁴³ As Andrew Ross put it, "What were the churches to do now? The synods of Blantyre and Livingstonia were paralyzed, since they appeared to be part of the new opposition. After all, the dismissed cabinet ministers, with one exception, were their members..."⁴⁴ And "... the

⁴¹ See Kenneth R. Ross, *Christianity in Malawi: A Source Book*, Gweru: Mambo, 1996, pp. 195-201.

⁴² See J. Matthew Schoffeleers, *In Search of Truth and Justice*, Zomba: Kachere, 1999, pp. 17-60.

⁴³ John L. Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2010.

⁴⁴ Ross, "Forty-five Years of Turmoil," p. 56.

smaller churches, which had been silent on political and social issues [...] felt they could say or do little now. The Mkhoma (sic) Synod and the Roman Catholic bishops were in a quandary, since [...] if they spoke against the government, it might do untold harm to their position and their ability to carry on their mission..."⁴⁵ The same could be said of the Anglican Church, especially after the Chipembere Rebellion in 1965.⁴⁶

Catholic Case Study

In 1974 Linden had argued that with its "... continued emphasis on authority and hierarchy ... it is unlikely that the historical role of the Catholic Church in modern Malawi will differ in any important respects ... [the character of the church having been defined in the] formative period of 1888 – 1939."⁴⁷

The silencing of the Catholic-supported CDP in 1961 gave credence to Linden's argument. However, some priests sought to find voices within the spaces permitted by the MCP. One such voice belonged to Patrick Kalilombe. Ordained in 1962, he became the Catholic bishop of Lilongwe in 1972. Soon, his attempts to indigenize and make his church more self-sufficient caused friction with Dr Banda's MCP. In particular, his attempt to set up small groups (*miphakati*) to promote education, health, justice and communal well-being was viewed with deep hostility by the Government.⁴⁸ At that time in Malawi any civil organizations outside of the MCP were viewed with suspicion. Kalilombe was accused of being a communist and eventually forced to go into exile.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ Ross, "Forty-Five Years of Turmoil," p. 56.

⁴⁶ James Tengatenga, *Church, State and Society in Malawi: The Anglican Case*, Zomba: Kachere, 2006, pp. 100–146.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ *Dictionary of African Christian Biography* "Patrick Kalilombe," <https://dachb.org/stories/malawi/kalilombe-patrick/>, [1.1.2018].

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Pentecostal, Evangelical and 'Born Again' Pastors.

In terms of personal redemption, the Malawi Pentecostal and Charismatic revival, beginning in the 1970s, was revolutionary, enlivening faith and the rituals of worship.⁵⁰ However, evidence so far suggests that this has not been as socio-economically holistic to society as has been claimed.

From the arrival of the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement personal factors have dominated the motivation of these churches' growth. Gadama and Hofmeyr recorded a number of reasons people gave for joining Charismatic and Pentecostal churches: "Rebirth of their faith... Dissatisfied with life as Christians... Love, concern, reconciliation and unity... Knowledge about God... Lively faith... A living example... Friends... Good and sound Biblical teachings... Solving a specific problem... Miracles and prophecies... Searching for the truth."⁵¹ These are laudable aims but, it must be noted, mostly deal with personal faith, spiritual healing and salvation, not socio-economic salvation.

However, it is the next section which is contestable: "The charismatic churches have... greatly enhanced spiritual growth, strengthened the Christian witness, improved the well-being of Malawian Christians, and promoted the growth and well-being of Malawian society, which will continue to reap benefits well into the twenty first century."⁵² It is not clear in what ways the well-being of Malawian society has been improved. Being 'Born Again' may be good for the

⁵⁰ Cf. Rhodian Munyenembe, *Christianity and Socio-cultural Issues*, pp. 123–125; and Klaus Fiedler, "The Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements in Malawi in Cultural Perspective," *Religion in Malawi*, Vol. 9, 1999, pp. 27–41.

⁵¹ Richard G. Gadama and Johannes W. Hofmeyr, "The Early Formation of Charismatic Churches in Malawi and their Significance for the Making of Malawian Society," *Studia Historicae Ecclesiasticae*, Vol. 42, No. 2, 2016, pp. 116–135.

⁵² *Ibid.*

individual but it is difficult to see how this helps general society economically.

As van Dijk argued in 1998: "For the Born Again movement, the truth lies with a Christian future, utopian in its emancipatory promise."⁵³ Inevitably, in practice the growth of charismatic churches like Living Waters, Agape, Calvary Family Church and Glad Tidings Church, following the much earlier Pentecostal wave of the Apostolic Faith Mission, Assemblies of God and other denominations, energized religious worship rather than socio-economic church agency. And, from the perspective of this essay, the clergy here were more dependent on their flock's giving rather than the clergy finding ways of making churches and their congregations economically independent.

A Coming Together of Churches

A spirit of ecumenism relevant to the present paper has been observed in Malawi from time to time. The Christian Council of Malawi (CCM) "which excludes the Catholics and Pentecostals" was formed in 1942.⁵⁴ In 1965, in response to a number of disasters, the Christian Service Committee (CSC) was formed by the Christian Council of Malawi and has included, from 1968, the Catholic Episcopal Conference.⁵⁵

⁵³ Rick A. van Dijk, "Pentecostalism, Cultural Memory and the State: Contested Representations of Time in Postcolonial Malawi," in Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (eds), *Postcolonial Identities in Africa*, London: Zed Books, 1998.

⁵⁴ See *Constitution of the Christian Council*, Blantyre: Heatherwick Press, 1951. Copy in the MNA

⁵⁵ James Tengatenga, *The UMCA in Malawi: A History of the Anglican Church 1861 -2010*, Zomba: Kachere, 2010, p. 25; Louis A.H. Msukwa, "The Role of the Churches in the Development of Malawi, With Particular Reference to the Christian Service Committee of the Church of Malawi," *Religion in Malawi*, Vol. 1, 1987, pp. 23-27.

The Christian Service Committee (CSC) is the development arm of Malawi's Christian churches. It was formed as an ecumenical organization, with Catholics (the Episcopal Conference of Malawi) and Protestants (the Christian Council of Malawi) as constituent bodies. The organization works in various sectors, including water [supplies], low-cost housing, women's rights and agriculture. The agriculture department has 18 extension workers. Of these, 11 (called development workers) work through churches, while the rest (credit assistants) work with women credit groups...⁵⁶

Tengatenga, whose Anglican Church sponsored the Christian non-governmental organization World Vision's registration in Malawi, equates the formation of the CSC with the arrival of World Vision International (WVI). WVI's rural development programme stimulated 'many rural growth centres in the 1980s'.⁵⁷ The CSC and NGOs like World Vision, often clergy-led, have had a significant impact on fighting poverty in Malawi.

Church, State and PPPs

On 8th April 1992 Malawi Catholic Bishops surprised the world with their Pastoral Letter.⁵⁸ The Letter was a long-delayed acceptance by the Catholic clergy that, for decades, they had neglected, not just the political, but also the socio-economic conditions of their flock. Malawi Catholic clergy had, for example, failed to speak out at critical periods of hunger, as in 1988. Various regional Catholic conferences had highlighted socio-economic issues in different countries. This pastoral letter has been examined widely and further comment would

⁵⁶ Martin Banda, "Seed Multiplication and Dissemination by the Christian Service Committee of the Churches in Malawi," Symposium Paper delivered Kampala, Uganda 10-13 October 1994, CIAT African Workshop, Series No. 32, pp. 90-94.

⁵⁷ Tengatenga, *The UMCA in Malawi*, p. 25.

⁵⁸ See Lwanda, *Kamuzu Banda of Malawi*, appendix.

appear superfluous.⁵⁹ It is sufficient to claim here that it was the agency of Catholic bishops that catalyzed the transition process; indeed, in content and socio-economic urgency and agency, the tone of pastoral letters since 1992 has become less radical.

The formation of the Public Affairs Committee (PAC) in response to the Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter was the high point in Malawi ecumenism. The PAC resulted from the need for unity among religious and opposition groups in the face of Dr Banda's hegemony, any divisions would have led to individual religious leaders being picked off one by one. All Presbyterian Synods, the Anglican Church, Muslim leaders, the Malawi Law Society, leaders of the Business Community, the Catholic Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the Seventh Day Baptist Church, the Church of Christ, the Providence Industrial Mission, and the Zambezi Evangelical Church signed the letter calling for a referendum on a future system of government.⁶⁰

The PAC, clergy-led or fronted, did achieve the miracle of 'midwifing' a democratic dispensation. However, some say that it was a change to democracy, leaving many of the 'rules of the economic, political, social, cultural and class' games intact.⁶¹ Over the years, PAC has survived as a political voice for the clergy' although its powers and influence has been tested and sometimes diluted.⁶² Some, including the author, would fault the PAC for neglecting the 'poverty alleviation aspects of its possible remit'. For example, in a nation

⁵⁹ Cf. Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *God, People and Power in Malawi: Democratisation in Theological Perspective*, Zomba: Kachere, 1996.

⁶⁰ Letter from Reverends Silas Nyirenda and Misanjo Kansilanga to John Tembo the Minister of State in the Malawi Government, May 1992, copy in my archives.

⁶¹ Cf. Saleta Phiri, "Zinthu Zasintha, Malamulo Sanasinthe," on *Ndirande Blues*, CD. Glasgow Pamtondo, PAM025.

⁶² Cf. Mustafa K. Hussein, "Intra-state Conflict and Indigenous-based Conflict Resolution Mechanisms in Malawi: the Role of the Public Affairs Committee," *African Security Review*, Vol. 20, No. 1, 2011, pp. 26-39.

where it has become common for ‘millions’ of *kwacha* to be stolen from government coffers, one rarely hears protests from PAC which is quick to comment on purely political matters. These thefts, like the Cashgate,⁶³ impoverish Malawians by depriving them of funds for health, social welfare and education, and, in the long run, retarding development.

This essay is not about the clergy as politicians. It is about the clergy as guardians of morals and ethics. And since Malawi clergy voluntarily engage with politicians and are aware of, despite doctrinal or ritual differences, what helps their flock economically, the broader question of what and how they react to political circumstances prevail. We have the example of the Jehovah’s Witnesses’ experiences in Malawi to guide us; their eschewing of political engagement was, it could be argued, suicidal in a nation where Nkrumah’s ‘Seek ye the political kingdom first and all else shall follow’ dictum prevails.

The period of independence from 1964 to 1994 saw PPPs lose their independence as development agents. Their efforts, where they flourished, could only be channelled through organizations like the Christian Service Committee which the government could monitor.

But even after a change into multiparty dispensation, between 1994 and 2001, the PAC clergy component was mostly silent on issues of the economy. Most observers, including the author, would contend that this is the period when the roots of Cashgate were sown, during Bakili Muluzi’s presidency. A lot of government money was diverted from developmental functions into patronage.

The Malawi Christian Clergy in the 21st Century

After midwifing the transition, most of the clergy from the established churches seemed to have become more restrained on

⁶³ Cashgate refers to the looting of government funds by civil servants and politicians between 2008 and 2012. See Baker Tilly *Report on Fraud and Mismanagement of Malawi Government Finances*, National Audit Office, Malawi, 2014.

social, economic and political affairs. Those that were active tended to be on the side of government, co-opted into parastatals or saying prayers at the beginning of political meetings. But as the millennium approached a number of factors, mostly political, raised the ire of the clergy, particularly those in the older established churches. And, paradoxically, in the 2000s, as the Catholic and some Protestant leaders, became 'less politically conservative' or 'restrained', the newer churches in Malawi seemed to take on some of the characteristics of the earlier Catholic church noted earlier by Linden.

PAC's Third Term Success

The PAC came alive again during the Third Term debate when Bakili Muluzi attempted to stand for a third term as president. An Nkhoma Synod Pastoral letter critical of the government, issued in 2001, gives a flavour of the debate.⁶⁴ It addressed socio-economic concerns, health, life expectancy, poverty, literacy, food insecurity, poor governance and the issue of the Third Term: "We feel concerned about moves that are being taken to amend the constitution of Malawi, (the Supreme Law of the Land) as put in place during 1994/95, in the short-term interest of those currently in power."⁶⁵ The Nkhoma Synod Pastoral letter is used here to demonstrate the change in attitudes that had occurred between 1991 and 2001. Church leaders were now in the forefront of opposition to autocracy,⁶⁶ an action Kenneth Ross described as, "... [showing that], within civil society, the churches have proved to be the most effective agents in challenging the ruling elite. The unity and unanimity with which they opposed the third-term bid is identified as the key to their

⁶⁴ Willy S. Zeze, "Christianity: A State-sponsored Religion in Malawi?"

⁶⁵ Cf. Joda-Mbewe, *Urban Poverty*, p. 356. The 1994 constitution created a Senate; the Bakili Muluzi Government repealed this in 2001.

⁶⁶ Even though one of the incentives was an anti-Islamic agenda; they feared that Muluzi would, if given a third term, significantly 'Islamize Malawi.' See David Bone, "Malawi's Muslim Communities in their Local and Global Context," *Muslims and Islam in Africa*, 2016, p. 18.

effectiveness."⁶⁷ But since 2001, this unity and unanimity among the PPPs has been as fitful as the nature of clergy involvement in socioeconomic issues on behalf of their flock.

Ordained by God to Rule

Indeed, since the Third Term measure was defeated, many PPPs have become part of Malawi's problematic elite for the following reasons. First, some PPPs, as supporters, advisers or government patronage beneficiaries, become complicit with and legitimize the governing party by promoting the 'democratic' version of 'ordained by God' to rule Malawi. Others through indifference or silence, indulge in 'palliative poverty reduction measures' like distributing donated maize. Yet other PPPs accept patronage from business, such as that from Cashgate⁶⁸ or that given by state actors to compliant chiefs, politicians or clergy. Many PPPs, for example, were surprisingly silent when this was said: "[Democratic Progressive Party] secretary general, Greselder Jeffrey, has declared that, whether Satan likes it or not, President Peter Mutharika will be the party's torchbearer in the 2019 polls and win."⁶⁹

As moral guardians of the nation, the clergy have been rather reticent about addressing one of the issues that contributes to poverty and arguably one of the most visible aspects of the socio-economic decline of Malawi since independence: corruption. "Cashgate" exemplifies the corrupt exploitation of systematic loopholes by civil servants, politicians and business people. It begun to be widely practiced during Bakili Muluzi's term, and was refined during Bingu

⁶⁷ Kenneth R. Ross, "Worrisome Trends: The Voice of the Churches in Malawi's Third Term Debate," *African Affairs*, Vol. 103, Issue 410, 2004, pp. 91–107.

⁶⁸ See Baker Tilly Report on Fraud and Mismanagement of Malawi Government Finances.

⁶⁹ Moses Chitsulo, "DPP secretary general dares Satan on Peter Mutharika candidacy," www.times.mw/dpp-secretary-general-dares-satan-on-peter-mutharika-candidacy, accessed 12.4.2018.

wa Mutharika's period,⁷⁰ before exploding under the lax supervision of Joyce Banda.⁷¹ The amounts of money stolen are often staggering. Consider that the amount of money publicized as having been given to the Democratic Progressive Party by a business man seeking to win a police contract (K145,000,000) is the same as that projected to run the entire Likoma District Council for a year (K148,000,000) and, when we consider that, compared to the usual 'cashgated' amounts, this was a 'small political gift', the enormity of the diversion of public funds becomes acute.⁷²

But why have most PPPs remained silent in the face of such 'pauperizing plunder?' PAC includes a range of personalities, religions and ideologies; on many issues state actors can easily split PAC clergy. There is also the "violence of money" in political, economic and social life of a poor country like Malawi.⁷³ Similar factors pertain at a personal level among PPPs; even bishops can be tested.⁷⁴ Thus the personal subverts the good communal intentions.

The Land and Commercial Question

Rural poverty, arising from the advancing commercialization of peri-urban and rural land, is one of the matters to which one would have expected Wilfrid Gudu's successors to pay their attention.⁷⁵ Despite

⁷⁰ Cf. John L. Lwanda, "Kwacha: the Violence of Money in Malawi's Politics, 1954-2004," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 32, No 3, (2006), pp. 525-544

⁷¹ Baker Tilly *Report*, 2014.

⁷² Thoko Kaime, *The Nation*, December 22, 2018, "Explaining the K145 million," <https://mw.nation.com/explaining-the-k145-million>.

⁷³ Lwanda, Kwacha: the Violence of Money.

⁷⁴ See Wanga Gwede, "Malawi Catholic Bishops Reject K50,000 Cash Handout from State House - Talk Tough on Gays," 2016, <http://allafrica.com/stories/201601111046.html>, accessed 22.7.2018.

⁷⁵ On rural land, see Paul Kishindo, "Customary Land Tenure and the New Land Policy in Malawi," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* Vol. 22, No. 2 (2004), pp. 213-225; and Greenwell Matchaya, "Land Ownership Security in Malawi," *African Journal of Agricultural Research* Vol. 4, No. 1 (2009), pp. 1-13.

the increase in population and increasing loss of traditional leaders' power on land issues, little has been heard from Chilembwe's successors.

Many modern PPPs, when compared to historical PPPs for their socio-economic agency, could be found wanting despite the educational progress made over the last one hundred years. During my research for this paper I looked for examples that encapsulated the nexus between what PPPs are primarily about and what they can do to alleviate poverty.⁷⁶ Two examples are illustrative.

The first concerns land ownership and use and attitudes and activities of some PPPs to land acquisition and development. Felix Chingota argued that PPPs could be more involved in land issues on behalf of the poor.⁷⁷ In this regard I looked at the acquisition of new 'plots' in Mzuzu, Lilongwe and Blantyre, the 'commercial' hubs of Malawi. I found that some church groups are acquiring plots for 'church development' at faster rates, in some instances, than that at which some local entrepreneurs are acquiring commercial and industrial plots. A particularly good example of the disparity in commercial and religious plots is the section in Lilongwe to the left of the new Bingu Stadium as you drive towards Area 25, starting from the bridge at Ntandire and Area 47. Many of the plots here belong to church groups, not commerce. This pattern is common in Lilongwe and Blantyre and both have limited industrial zones. In a growing city like Lilongwe it would be expected that job opportunities, in the form of commercial concerns would also be prioritized. Mzuzu also boasts of a growing number of church buildings erected by its growing number of PPPs.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Cf. John 12:8 and Mathew 26:8 for the theological arguments.

⁷⁷ See Felix Chingota, "Land Policy Reform Programme Document and Poverty Alleviation in Malawi: a Christian Theological Contribution to the Debate," *Journal of Humanities (Zomba)*, Vol. 20, (2006), pp. 124–148.

⁷⁸ Zeenah Sibande, *The Religious Geography of Mzuzu City in Northern Malawi*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2018.

It is not just the prioritizing of church buildings that is a concern. Given that some or in some cases a lot of the money buying plots and building churches is sourced from abroad and local flock, the legal ownership of some of the church plots and buildings can be ambiguous; they are sometimes owned by church leaders. The lack of school buildings is also an issue of concern. Much like Jehovah's Witnesses of old, many new churches seem not to build schools but to depend on other religions and government to teach their children. While planned, half-finished, nearly finished or finished big churches are seen, one notices the absence of primary or secondary school buildings. This is perhaps not always the fault of PPPs who can afford these plots but perhaps the fault of city planners. The effect though is as if Lilongwe (or indeed Blantyre, Mzuzu or other cities) can thrive with dozens of churches to cater for the 'Sunday needs' but with no factories to provide jobs for 'Monday to Friday' needs and no schools to provide the 'Monday to Friday' educational seeds for future 'commerce.'

Similar phenomena are seen in the rural context. PPPs, as church leaders and "fund managers" for their churches are often responsible for internal and external funds. They prioritize church buildings, orphanages, and other activities, at the expense of building schools, and, in an agricultural country, farms, fishponds, dams or other sustainable concerns while the money lasts. Church ministries collectively mobilize millions of local and foreign *kwacha*. Rarely are the funds used for what could be termed sustainable agricultural, educational or other economic activities. Thus, we argue, the other two Cs in Livingstone's triad are often ignored. Some churches have partnered with more developmental, as opposed to palliative, conscious external NGOs.

The Culture of Some New Forms of Christianity

Newer churches offer interesting areas for the consideration of anthropologists or religious studies scholars. In terms of organizational culture, founder/leader PPPs, like Shepherd Bushiri, may lead

ostentatious lifestyles due to their "God-given wealth." The source of this wealth is often couched in language of "hard work," "personal business" and "God provided." Some PPPs are "omnipotent" in that they can advise their flock on business, spiritual issues, marriage, travel, school, or any other affair of personal life. Here, they resemble 19th century Catholic priests and their rural flock in Europe, where adherents appeared happy to follow the dictates of their religious leaders. Some followers cannot make any decisions without consulting their *abusa* (pastors).

A further contradiction is the observation that these groups, some modelled on T.B. Joshua and other West African or American preachers, though professing to be Protestant in nature, often show a tendency to hark back to pre-Reformation Catholicism with a penchant for selling "holy" or "anointing" water, strict tithing and submission to PPPs' authority. There is often an emphasis on economic success through prayer. PPPs and apostles have to be seen to make successful predictions, miracles or prayers. Munyenymbe suggests that this imperative to be seen to be successful can lead to "insincerity," an emphasis on "eschatological issues" (while PPPs lead a good life), "authoritarianism," "escapism," and "the abuse of spiritual gifts."⁷⁹

Some PPPs also subscribe to "prosperity Gospel;" you are poor if you do not pray hard enough. Politically, interesting trajectories are being observed in the light of Linden's observations about the Malawi Catholic church of the 1950s and 1960s which was, "profoundly conservative and [...] it was a small but powerful brake on the development of political consciousness amongst its membership, for its political stance was always a tacit acceptance of the status quo..."⁸⁰

While many leaders of the Catholic and Presbyterian churches are becoming more outspoken on poverty and political issues, some

⁷⁹ Munyenymbe, *Christianity and Socio-Cultural Issues*, pp. 127–133.

⁸⁰ Linden, *Catholics, Peasants and Chewa Resistance*, p. 208.

PPPs in the new religious groups, mostly "Pentecostal"⁸¹ or "Charismatic," but including breakaway groups from "established" Catholic and Protestant churches or "revivalists," are becoming more detached from socioeconomic issues, concentrating on building their churches.⁸²

Inevitably, given the lifestyles and culture of "ministry and evangelism," some PPPs, instead of becoming agents of poverty alleviation, developmental "commerce" and "civilization,"⁸³ have instead become parasitical on their flock, collecting millions in church tithes, often in a less than transparent manner. Some PPPs' "successful" glitzy lifestyles are far removed from the Livingstone or Chilembwe models.

The mobilization of funds, local and foreign, by "prophets, pastors and priests," which are then used for church and other non-sustainable activities can, and often does, complement the waste of national resources as exemplified by "daily mini-Cashgates" that drain central government of funds. In this sense, it makes PPPs complicit in perpetuating Malawi's poverty.

The Kingdom of Man

While men like Chilembwe took a holistic approach to pastoral care, some 21st century PPPs appear conflicted on this point. They, at times, preach a lot about the rewards of a good life being in heaven but are themselves enjoying the material benefits of state largesse. A number of PPPs from the broad spectrum of Christianity in Malawi, Catholic, Anglican, Presbyterian, Pentecostal and Evangelical, have taken political sides and rewards. This essay argues that this trend of

⁸¹ 'The terms "born again" or "*Pente*" are often used blanket fashion to refer to both Pentecostals and Charismatics in Malawi. See Rhodian Munyenembe, *Christianity and Socio-cultural Issues*, p. 34.

⁸² Some of these, like Shepherd Bushiri's ECG, may donate maize without addressing root causes of poverty.

⁸³ Paradoxically, belief in "Satan" and "witchcraft" as "causes of misfortune" "until one repents" are encouraged.

taking sides and patronage promotes the diversion of funds from state developmental and social welfare work from the poor. For this reason, some PPPs were visibly partisan during the 1999, 2004, 2009, 2014 and 2019 elections.⁸⁴ This partisanship feeds into the narratives of Cashgate and weakens ordinary people's voting power in relation to effecting desired political and economic change.

Conclusion

It is not known how T. B. Joshua came to his conclusion on Malawi. What is true is the perception and reality that religion itself, largely due to its leaders, has at times become an agent of progress and at other times an impoverishing factor in Malawi. Malawians, at different levels of society, are still talking about John Chilembwe. This is not just because he was at one time a 'useful martyr' politically, but because his achievements and legacy have stood the test of time.

In recent times the amount of aid that Chilembwe could only dream about has been given to Malawi churches of all colours. Many donor derived poverty alleviation programmes go through church groups led by PPPs; issues of accountability are not always above board; and PPPs can also palliate poverty via relief funds, thereby increasing dependency.

A number of PPPs are facing Bonk's dilemma;⁸⁵ church associated money contributes, despite opaque denials to the obvious, to good lifestyles for PPPs in the face of endemic poverty. The dress code of many PPPs harks back to the John Chilembwe era, smart expensive

⁸⁴ Cf. Qeko Jere and Vhumani Magezi, "Pastoral Letters and the Church in the Public Square: An Assessment of the Role of Pastoral Letters in Influencing Democratic Processes in Malawi," *Verbum Eccles*, (Online), Vol. 39, No. 1, 2018, pp. 1-9., www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2074-77052018000100012&lng=en&nrm=iso, [17.5.2019].

⁸⁵ Jonathan Bonk, *Missions and Money: Affluence as a Western Missionary Problem*, New York: Orbis, 2007.

suits, silk ties and, sometimes, the obligatory translators, translating an African PPP speaking in English into the vernacular.

Another issue is that of development and corruption. This essay merely flags the issue of "the exploitation of religious beliefs" for the monetary benefit of a few. Using the argument that Malawi authorities "skew priorities," it is possible to argue that some of the funds collected in the name of religious activity in Malawi could be used for developmental purposes, religious or otherwise.

Malawi is indeed a very religious country. But when Agbiji and Swart wonder how (for Africa in general) it is possible to have endemic poverty and corruption in the face of such overt religiosity we have to wonder this for Malawi too.⁸⁶ As they suggest, "religious complicity sustains poverty"⁸⁷ and "God talk" weakens "masses resolve to rise up against unjust political and economic systems."⁸⁸ The argument here is that PPPs can be viewed as agents of palliation, helping the state authorities resist legitimate demands by the population for developmental activities.

It is often stated that Malawians live in a duality of the traditional and modern. We can now argue, with no pun intended, that some now live in a 'trinity': traditional, modern and religious as disciples of "men (and women) of God" – *abusa* or *aprofeti*. It is beyond the remit of this essay to delve into matters of individual faith. However, we suggest that religion that promises redemption in heaven while collecting tithes from its adherents regardless of the wretchedness of the context of their lives contributes to passivity and poverty on

⁸⁶ Obaji Agbiji and Ignatius Swart, "In the Wake of Overt Religiosity: a Critical and Appreciative Perspective on Religion as a Force for Social Transformation and Development in African Society," in Stan Chu Ilo (ed), *Wealth, Health, and Hope in African Christian Religion: The Search for Abundant Life*, London: Lexington, 2018.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, p. 282–284.

⁸⁸ *Ibid*, p. 273.

earth. As do, like the colonial hut taxes, donations and exhortations to blind obedience.

This essay argues that Christian clergy should revisit Livingstone's three Cs: Christianity, Commerce and Civilization. Malawi needs more than churches, conversions, prayers, prophets, pastors, ministers, priests and prophecies – the first C. Second, it also needs schools and a Civilizing (in the civics sense of the word) moral and ethical education – the second C. Third, Malawi, well over a hundred years after David Livingstone visited, still, and will always, need Commerce – the third C; Commerce, industry and agriculture to employ, feed, clothe its population. Who can better inculcate a moral, ethical and fair sense of commerce than those who claim those virtues as their own?

The Influence of Christian Religious Authority in Education: A Trajectory of Religious Education in Malawi Schools from 1875 to 2018

Macloud Frank Salanjira

Introduction

This chapter discusses the influence of Christian religious authority in Malawi's education¹ through a trajectory of Religious Education (RE) from 1875 to 2018. It highlights notable changes in RE national curriculum within Malawi's historical and socio-political context. The trajectory of RE in Malawi is presented for two main reasons: first, to illuminate the domination of Christian religious leaders in RE curriculum policy and practice, and second, to describe their continuing influence on Malawi's national RE curriculum in the modern period. Using *elites' theory*, the argument is that moves and counter-moves in Malawi's RE policy and practice have occurred within a highly contested terrain in which the Christian religious leaders have exerted a significant amount of influence.²

Methodology

This chapter adopts a qualitative approach with one guiding question: How does the trajectory of Religious Education in Malawi from 1875 to 2018 reflect the influence of Christian religious authority in education? A *genealogical analysis* drawing on Foucault's concept of genealogy³ is employed because it is concerned with tracing "the

¹ See Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *Christianity in Malawi: a Source Book*, Gweru: Mambo Press, 2000.

² L.J. Cary, *Curriculum Spaces: a Postmodern Approach to Educational Research*, trans. C. Cannell, Mahwah, NJ: Peter Lang, 2006, p. xi.

³ M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, London: Routledge, 1972.

historical process of descent and emergence by which a given thought system or process comes into being and is subsequently transformed."⁴ It "exposes the motives, pressures and power underlying our supposed rationality;"⁵ as a given thought system or process in any field of knowledge. As Foucault argues, all thought systems or processes are discursive formations, reflecting particular ways of thinking at a given point in time.⁶

Furthermore, a genealogical analysis has assisted in outlining the historical process by which RE started in Malawi schools and has subsequently changed over time. It is also crucial in explaining the power structures influencing Malawi's national RE curriculum while giving a glimpse of the influence of Christian religious authority on education in Malawi. An evidence base of the Christian religious leaders' influence on RE curriculum policy situated within the country's historical and socio-political context reflects a conception of policy as politically, socially and historically contextualized.⁷

A periodization of the trajectory of RE policy and practice in Malawi's education is employed based on four eras. The first is the era of RE under Christian missionary control: 1875- 1925. The second era is when RE was under British colonial government control: 1926-1963 while the third is the era of RE after Malawi's independence: 1964-2000. The fourth one covers the period from 2001 to 2018 when Malawi started offering RE based on two syllabuses of Bible Knowledge (BK) and Religious and Moral Education (RME). This periodization is intended to give a historical framework within which to describe, analyze and theorize the influence of Christian religious authority in Malawi's education. It is

⁴ M. Olssen, J. Codd, and O. Neill, *Education Policy: Globalisation, Citizenship & Democracy*, London: Sage Publications, 2004, p. 45.

⁵ A. Vincent, *Modern Political Ideologies*, 2nd ed., Oxford: Blackwell, 1995, p. 187.

⁶ Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*.

⁷ Olssen, Codd and Neill, *Education Policy*, p. 3.

a form of context-building, providing a bigger picture through which readers are given a vantage point of the Christian religious leaders' influence in RE in Malawi schools. It is also intended to enable readers to have a perspective from which to judge the views being presented as well as providing a historical framework within which the theoretical, conceptual and methodological issues should be understood.⁸ Furthermore, context-building is critical in recognizing the importance of a historical and socio-political context in the construction of knowledge about any social phenomenon. As Slattery argues, the "meaning of events cannot be separated from their context, just as the knower cannot be separated from the known."⁹ Thus, the trajectory of Malawi's RE curriculum policy and practice is situated in its context to manifest deeper historical, structural and ideological posturing of Christian religious leaders in the national RE curriculum.

For sources of information, the chapter draws heavily on documentary sources. Primary sources used include minutes on Religious and Moral Education national consultation meetings organized by Malawi's Ministry of Education involving Christian and Muslim faith-community leaders as stakeholders and elites in education; Malawi's Constitution and Ministry of Education circular letter on the introduction of BK and RME syllabuses in 2001. The secondary sources used include reports on consultations on the adoption of multi-faith RE approach in East and Central Africa; newspaper articles commenting on the Christian religious leaders' contestation of the introduction of RME as a multi-faith syllabus in 2000; the Phelps-Stokes Commission Report; Malawi's multi-faith

⁸ S.J. Ball, *Education Policy and Social Class: the Selected Works of Stephen J. Ball*, London: Routledge, 2006; and M.A. Constanas, "Qualitative Analysis as a Public Event: the Documentation of Category Development Procedures," *American Educational Research Journal*, Vol. 29, 1993, pp. 253-266.

⁹ P. Slattery, *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*, 2nd ed., New York: Routledge, 2006. p. 66.

RE syllabuses for primary and secondary school levels; local and international books on RE curriculum theory and practice in particular and on education in general.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

The concept of *hegemony* is used as a conceptual framework while *elites' theory* is used as a theoretical framework to discuss the influence of Christian religious leaders in the national RE curriculum. *Hegemony* as posited by Gramsci is generally used to describe the domination of one social group over other ideologically different groups.¹⁰ In this chapter hegemony describes the domination of the Christian religious leaders over leaders of other religions regarding Malawi's national RE curriculum. That domination has been manifested in several forms based on Christian religious leaders' ideology of the purpose of RE in schools, reflecting what Apple describes as the link between ideology and curriculum.¹¹ This link is detected in the way Christian religious leaders have tended to influence Malawi's national RE curriculum.

Elites' theory is employed in this chapter to explain the domination of the Christian religious leaders as elites in Malawi's national RE curriculum. In general, *elites' theory* focuses on the powerful elements in society.¹² A significant amount of literature on *elites' theory* in social and political sciences shows that the elites or powerful do influence events in society based on their different ideologies either as groups

¹⁰ A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1971; N. Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language*, London: Longman Group Limited, 1995.

¹¹ M.W. Apple, *Ideology and Curriculum*, 3rd ed., New York: Routledge Falmer, 2004.

¹² L. Gearon and A. Kuusisto, "Researching the Influence of Religious Authority in Education," *Power and Education*; J. Ozga, "Researching the Powerful: Seeking Knowledge about Policy," *European Educational Research Journal*, 2011, Vol. 10, No. 2, pp. 689-707.

or individuals.¹³ As such, there is always a history of significant events that happen in society in terms of a particular ideological and political climate as well as particular groups and individuals which together influence the shape as well as timing of policies, their evolution and consequences.¹⁴ In this sense, *elites' theory* has the potential to illuminate the struggle between conflicting beliefs in education based on differences in ideological posturing by elites.¹⁵ Malawi's development of RE curriculum reflects ideological domination by Christian religious leaders over others. The domination has been manifested in two forms: the exclusion of other religions in Malawi's national RE curriculum and the contestation of RME as a multi-faith RE syllabus. Such domination reflects the influence of Christian religious leaders' authority in Malawi's education.

In addition, *elites' theory* illuminates the Christian religious leaders as elites and powerful stakeholders in education with the desire to have Christianity dominate Malawi's national RE curriculum in one way or another. Such domination has the potential of creating contestation in any sphere of life.¹⁶ Their contestation to multi-faith RE resonates with the assertion that curriculum is a hotly contested

¹³ S.J. Ball, *Foucault, Power and Education*, London: Routledge, 2013; J.A. Conti and M. O'Neil, "Studying Power: Qualitative Methods and the Globe Elite," *Qualitative Research*, 7(1), 2007, pp. 63-82; W.S. Harvey, "Methodological Approaches for Interviewing Elites," *Geography Compass*, 4(3), 2010, pp. 193-205; G. Moyes and M. Wagstaffe (eds), *Research Methods for Elites Studies*, London: Allen and Unwin, 1987; J. Ozga, "Researching the Powerful."

¹⁴ S. Taylor, F. Rizvi, B. Lingard and M. Henry, *Educational Policy and the Politics of Change*, London: Routledge, 1997.

¹⁵ Y. Boman, "The Struggle between Conflicting Beliefs: on the Promise of Education," *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 38(5), 2006, pp. 545-568.

¹⁶ A. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*; N. Fairclough, *Critical Discourse Analysis: the Critical Study of Language*. London: Longman Group Limited, 1995.

space.¹⁷ It also underscores the fact that many "contemporary problems and crises in education are, in themselves, the surface manifestations of deeper historical, structural and ideological contradictions in educational policy."¹⁸

From an *elites theory* perspective, the Christian religious leaders' contestation of RME as a multi-faith syllabus reflects their ideology of what should be taught as RE in Malawi's education. It illuminates their constructed meaning as elites and stakeholders in education in a historically contested social domain.¹⁹ A fundamental issue is the way in which the Malawi school context has been organized or constructed over time to include or exclude certain forms of knowledge and understanding in RE. Such inclusion or exclusion illuminates the influence of Christian religious leaders in Malawi's education. As Kliebard argues, such influence is significant not just in a pedagogical sense but in terms of status attainment and social relations, if not social justice.²⁰ *Elites' theory* in this chapter illuminates the social relations between different religious leaders and accounts for who has been privileged or not by the way in which Malawi's RE national curriculum has been provided from 1875 to 1918.

RE under Christian Missionary Control: 1875-1925

From 1875 to 1925, the influence of Christian religious leaders and their authority in education was in its classical form because the provision of Western formal education was under the total control of

¹⁷ A.V. Kelly, *The Curriculum: Theory and Practice*, London: Sage Publications, 1999.

¹⁸ G. Grace, *School Leadership: Beyond Education Management: an Essay in Policy Scholarship*, London: Falmer, 1995, p. 3.

¹⁹ M. Foucault, *Power and Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings*, New York: Pantheon, 1980.

²⁰ H. M. Kliebard, "Constructing the History of the American Curriculum," in P. W. Jackson (ed), *Handbook of Research on Curriculum*, New York: Macmillan, 1992, pp. 157-184.

the various Christian missionaries.²¹ It was a period characterized by RE curriculum policy and practice that served the general aims of Christian mission education and ideologies of various Christian denominations in Malawi. This is critical to appreciate considering that the roots of Western formal education in Malawi predate colonial rule in that, although Malawi became a British protectorate in 1891, the colonial government did not become actively involved in the provision of education until 1926 when the first Department of Education was established.²² Ideologically, the Christian missionaries established schools mainly as agents of evangelization. RE was an important subject in the enterprise of spreading the Christian faith which education then intended to promote.²³ The argument is that the Christian religious leaders' authority began to influence the development of RE curriculum policy and practice from the onset of Western formal education in Malawi.

Between 1875 and 1925, many Christian missionaries as religious leaders and elites regarded schools as places of spreading the Christian faith. RE was an important subject for each Christian denomination.²⁴ It was, however, not a discursive space for promoting dialogue across different religions since the goal was to lead the learners to a confession of, and commitment to, a Christian denominational faith. It was the era of *denominationalism in education* where education was offered according to the ideology, needs and doctrines of each Christian denomination. The Christian religious leaders adopted a confessional approach to RE to meet their ideological ends. As was the case in most parts of the colonial world,

²¹ Banda, *A Brief History of Education in Malawi*; Nankwenya, "Christian Influences on Education in Malawi."

²² Banda, *A Brief History of Education in Malawi*.

²³ Ibid; and Nankwenya, "Christian Influences on Education in Malawi."

²⁴ I.A.J. Nankwenya, "Christian Influences on Education in Malawi;" M.F. Salanjira, "An Assessment of the Introduction and Reception of Religious and Moral Education Syllabus in Malawi Secondary Schools," MA, Faculty of Humanities, University of Malawi, Zomba, 2003.

the Christian schools "aimed at inculcating a Christian life and worldview in the consciousness" of the learners.²⁵ It resonates with King's observation that this was the case in many African countries when western formal education was controlled by Christian missions and churches.²⁶ Denominational church education aimed at producing committed church members so that even in the few government schools, learners were usually divided according to their denominations for Religious Instruction classes where outsiders from the churches would come to school to teach the learners.²⁷

The domination and influence of Christianity on the conduct of education in schools in Malawi had negative consequences for those members of society who belonged to different religions.²⁸ The design of the RE curriculum policy and practice meant that learners had either to convert to a Christian denomination or miss formal western education altogether. For instance, as observed by Chakanza,²⁹ Muslim parents who did not want to expose their children to the likelihood of converting to Christianity opted to keep their children away from the Christian mission schools. As a result, many Muslim children lagged behind in accessing western formal education in Malawi. Chidester, et al observe that:

²⁵ O. van Den Berge, "Africa: South," in J. M. Sutcliffe (ed), *A Dictionary of Religious Education*, London: SCM Press in association with the Christian Education Movement, 1984. p. 13.

²⁶ C. King, "Africa: Eastern," in J. M. Sutcliffe (ed), *A Dictionary of Religious Education*, London: SCM Press in association with the Christian Education Movement, 1984, pp. 10-12.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ J.C. Chakanza, "Sixth Inter-Church Consultation on Primary School Religious Education," *Religion in Malawi*, Vol. 2, No. 1, 1988, pp. 34-35; J.C. Chakanza (ed), *Islam Week in Malawi 1998: Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi*, No. 18, Zomba: Kachere, 2000.

²⁹ D. Chidester, G. Mitchell, G. Omar, and I.A. Phiri, *Religion in Public Education*, p. 51.

Muslim students tended to lag behind in receiving the benefits of a general education. Although increasing numbers of Muslim students were attending government schools, many Muslim parents remained suspicious of the role of Christian instruction in the curriculum.³⁰

RE under Colonial Government Control: 1926-63

The influence of Christian religious authority in education in Malawi's national RE curriculum continued to be felt even after the British colonial government had established the Department of Education in 1926 partly following the recommendations of the Phelps-Stokes Commission.³¹ The Commission came in the wake of the Chilembwe uprising of 1915 against British colonial rule. One recommendation was for the colonial government to start supervising and coordinating education which up to 1925 had been in the hands of the Christian missionaries and was perceived to be responsible for developing Africans with radical and subversive minds such as John Chilembwe himself.³²

The Department of Education was partly supposed to provide government guidance on the nature of education and also respond to the increasing demand for education by Africans. In the context of very limited resources, Christian missionaries realized the need for the colonial government to assist in the provision of education in the country.³³ However, the Christian missionaries did not want governmental supervision that interfered with their aim of evangelizing.³⁴ That is why RE in schools continued to be based on Christianity as a form of their continued domination of Malawi's national curriculum which provided a privileged space for the

³⁰ Chidester, Mitchell, Omar, and Phiri, *Religion in Public Education*, p. 85.

³¹ L.J. Lewis, *Phelps-Stokes Commission Reports on Education: Abridged with an Introduction*, London: OUP. 1962.

³² Ibid; and Nankwenya, "Christian Influences on Education in Malawi."

³³ Banda, *A Brief History of Education in Malawi*.

³⁴ L.J. Lewis, *Phelps-Stokes Commission Reports on Education*; Nankwenya, "Christian Influences on Education in Malawi."

Christian faith to be taught to learners.³⁵ Religions such as Islam and African Traditional Religions were excluded from the curriculum despite their strong presence in Malawi.³⁶

RE after Malawi's Independence: 1964-2000

After Malawi's independence in 1964, the influence of Christian religious leaders in education continued as evidenced in their support of RE based on the Bible and Christianity only.³⁷ One slight change was a parallel existence of teaching religion in both Christian mission and government schools for evangelical reasons known as Religious Instruction (RI) and teaching Religious Education (RE) also described as Religion Education,³⁸ using a non-confessional approach. The former involved each Christian denomination sending their member to the school to instruct learners in matters of faith according to their denominational doctrines. The latter involved the non-denominational teaching of BK (Bible Knowledge) as an academic subject taught by teachers paid by the government. The parallel existence of RI and RE was a deliberate arrangement meant to accommodate the Christian religious leaders' needs to evangelize among the learners and is still a common practice today in Malawi schools.³⁹

In the 1980s, there was a general trend characterized by a shift from single-faith to multi-faith RE in some countries in eastern, central and southern Africa in an attempt to improve the quality of RE in public schools.⁴⁰ The aim was to help Christian religious leaders

³⁵ M.F. Salanjira, "Contesting Spaces in Curriculum Policy Change: Exploring the Dual-Mode Religious Education for Secondary Schools in Malawi," PhD, Faculty of Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, RSA, 2009.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ M.F. Salanjira, "Contesting Spaces in Curriculum Policy Change."

³⁸ C. Steyn, *Religion in Life Orientation*, Pretoria: UNISA Press. 2004.

³⁹ M.F. Salanjira, "Contesting Spaces in Curriculum Policy Change."

⁴⁰ Ibid.

cooperate with the Ministries of Education in exploring effective ways of teaching RE so as to sustain the interest of both teachers and students.⁴¹ On both national and international levels, regular consultations were held to discuss the future of religious education in African schools. The consultations led to the beginning of curricular policy change in some countries from single-faith to multi-faith RE and Malawi was no exception.⁴² In Malawi, it led to the development of multi-faith RE curriculum based on three main religions namely, Christianity, Islam and Malawian traditional religions.⁴³ The change started in primary teacher training colleges in 1987 and primary schools in 1991.⁴⁴ To facilitate a smooth RE curricular transition for learners from primary to secondary schools,⁴⁵ a multi-faith RE syllabus was introduced in secondary schools in the year 2000 under the name Religious and Moral Education (RME). It was intended to replace the former single-faith syllabus called Bible Knowledge. All secondary school learners were expected to study this subject since it was part of the core curriculum.

One justification for multi-faith RE is that it can contribute to the project of educating citizens and creating "democratic schools in a

⁴¹ I.A. Phiri, "A Report of the East and Central Africa Inter-Church Consultation on Primary School Religious Education Held at Resthaven Conference Center in Harare, Zimbabwe from 1st to 7th April 1986," *Religion in Malawi*, 1(1), 1987, pp. 33-34 and "Report on the Fifth Consultation on Religious Education Held at Dimesse Sisters Conference Centre, Karen, Nairobi, Kenya, from 10th to 16th May," *Religion in Malawi*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1988, pp. 33-34.

⁴² Gerrie ter Harr, *Faith of Our Fathers: Studies on Religious Education in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Utrecht: Theological Faculty of the University of Utrecht, 1990.

⁴³ A term used for the various forms of African Traditional Religion in Malawi.

⁴⁴ Ministry of Education, *Primary School Teaching Syllabus: Religious Education Standards 1-8*, Domasi: Malawi Institute of Education, 1991.

⁴⁵ Primary education in Malawi has a span of eight years while secondary education has a span of four years.

free society."⁴⁶ As Banks argues, education in a democratic and pluralistic society should enable learners to acquire not only the content but also the values and skills needed to know reflectively, to care deeply, and to act thoughtfully.⁴⁷ It is therefore important in the design of social futures of the learners for effective citizenship in a democratic and multicultural dispensation.⁴⁸

One insight here is that Malawi's change to multi-faith RE curriculum policy and practice was in response to its socio-political context. In 1994 Malawi underwent political change from one-party dictatorship to multi-party democracy. The new political dispensation, with its attendant emerging issues, further justified curriculum change to uphold freedom of conscience, religious belief, thought and academic freedom.⁴⁹ The change also brought in, among other things, the concepts of respect for human rights and good governance in line with Malawi's new constitution.⁵⁰ Consequently, a new curriculum was designed and developed with the aim of equipping learners with skills, values, attitudes, knowledge and understanding that would enable them to become effective and positive citizens in a multi-faith and pluralistic society.⁵¹

Thus, Malawi's multi-faith RE was in line with the pluralistic nature of our contemporary society. The aim was to enable learners understand - not convert or condemn - the rich diversity of our

⁴⁶ J.A. Banks, *Educating Citizens in a Multicultural Society*, 2nd Ed., New York: Teachers College Press, 2007. p. xii.

⁴⁷ J.A. Banks, *An Introduction to Multicultural Education*, 4th Ed., Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2008.

⁴⁸ B. Cope and M. Kalantzis (eds), *Multiliteracies: Literacy Learning and the Design of Social Futures*, South Yarra: Macmillan. 2000.

⁴⁹ Ministry of Education, *Malawi Junior Secondary School Teaching Syllabus: Religious and Moral Education*, Domasi: Malawi Institute of Education, 1998.

⁵⁰ Malawi Government, *The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi*, Zomba: Government Printer, 2002.

⁵¹ Ministry of Education, *Malawi Junior Secondary School Teaching Syllabus: Religious and Moral Education*.

community.⁵² As Slattery argues, given the plurality of our contemporary society, the prime concern of RE curriculum policy and practice should be informing, not evangelizing, the learners.⁵³ Furthermore, Purpel observes that the religious diversity of current society should inform any RE curriculum policy and practice. RME as a multi-faith syllabus was an attempt to respond to Malawi's religious diversity in the context of its three main religious traditions.⁵⁴ However, the Christian religious leaders contested that change as was reported in the *Nation* newspaper as follows:

A high level meeting of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM) and Malawi Council of Churches (MCM) held yesterday in Lilongwe unanimously supported the suspension of Religious and Moral Studies (RME), a multi-faith subject, and recommended the retention of Bible Knowledge in schools until consultations are exhausted.⁵⁵

Furthermore, another issue of *The Nation* Newspaper quoted a joint statement by the Christian religious leaders which read in part as follows:

Therefore the representatives of the Episcopal Conference of Malawi and Malawi Council of Churches made the following recommendations that the current syllabus, namely Bible Knowledge, be upheld in secondary schools and the proposed religious education for primary schools which was introduced without consultation be withdrawn and religious education previously taught be upheld.⁵⁶

⁵² Slattery, *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*.

⁵³ Ibid, p. 86.

⁵⁴ D.E. Purpel, *The Moral and Spiritual Crisis in Education: a Curriculum for Justice and Compassion in Education*, Granby, MA: Bergin & Garvey, 1989; "Educational Discourse and Spirituality," *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 2005, 2(2), pp. 16-21.

⁵⁵ I. Chitosi, "Christians Uphold Bible Knowledge," *The Nation*, 08.03.2000, pp. 1, 3.

⁵⁶ I. Chitosi, "Tension Diffused: CCAP, Muslims Open Dialogue," *The Nation*, 08.03.2000. pp. 1-3.

The point here is that Christian religious leaders as elites used their influence to demand the withdrawal the multi-faith RE from schools at both primary and secondary education level.⁵⁷ This demand led to a controversy because the Muslim faith-community leaders were in support of the multi-faith RE syllabus.⁵⁸ They also argued that they did not "have any problem with both the content and the process of developing the RME syllabus,"⁵⁹ since they had participated in all the stages of its development.⁶⁰ As such, they endorsed the RME syllabus and were convinced "that it was a product of well-balanced professional work."⁶¹ From the perspective of *elites' theory*, one insight is that the Christian religious leaders' contestation of RME reflects that religious pluralism is a theological challenge to them.⁶²

The Malawi government suspended the implementation of RME syllabus in 2000 because of contestation by the Christian religious leaders. It called for national consultations among religious leaders to come up with a compromise curriculum on RE. A national consultative committee was instituted "to describe how best Malawi's secular education system should address the issue of religion in a multi-faith society."⁶³

Two main reasons given by the Christian religious leaders for their contestation of RME were that it had issues which they opposed and that it was introduced without consultations. For instance, the Episcopal Conference of Malawi argued that whoever took part in

⁵⁷ Minutes of the First National Consultative Meeting on Junior Secondary School Religious and Moral Education, 20.03.2000.

⁵⁸ I. Chitosi, "Muslims Threaten to Boycott School," *The Nation*, 10.03.2000.

⁵⁹ Minutes of the First National Consultative Meeting.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Kenneth R. Ross, "Religious Pluralism: A Theological Challenge to Malawian Christians," *Sources for the Study of Religion in Malawi*, No. 15, Zomba: Chancellor College, 1992, pp. 12-27.

⁶³ Minutes of the First National Consultative Meeting.

the initial consultations leading to the multi-faith syllabus was not their official representative.⁶⁴ The Malawi Council of Churches argued that they were left out in the consultations that led to the development of the RME syllabus which had some content they considered "*chikunja*" [pagan] and could not be taught in their schools.⁶⁵ Furthermore, they suspected that "RME was bent to promote certain religious beliefs,"⁶⁶ yet their view was that "Churches establish schools to teach the Bible and therefore, the Bible cannot just be replaced anyhow."⁶⁷ They also did not "accept the pedagogical approach that only imparts knowledge without conversion. To Malawi Council of Churches, conversion and teaching are complementary."⁶⁸ The Seventh Day Adventist Church similarly maintained that they were not "consulted in the development of the RME syllabus,"⁶⁹ which promoted teachings that "are not general principles but dogma relevant to specific denominations."⁷⁰ As such, RME had to be removed from the public schools because it was a bone of contention among different religious leaders besides the fact that "government is a secular institution and should not be entrusted with the promulgation of faith."⁷¹

In general, the Christian religious leaders argued that "Christian Churches have invested a lot in the country all for the purpose of upholding the name of Jesus."⁷² As such, "Christian schools, as part of the Christian investment, cannot be used for the teaching of

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Minutes of the Second National Consultative Meeting on Junior Secondary School Religious and Moral Education. 26.04.2000.

⁷² Minutes of the First National Consultative Meeting.

African Traditional Religions and Islam,"⁷³ which the RME syllabus was intending to do. It was because of that contestation that the Ministry of Education introduced a dual-mode national RE curriculum based on BK and RME in 2001.

The Dual-Mode RE Curriculum: 2001-2018

The introduction of the dual-mode RE curriculum in 2001 was a direct result of the Christian religious leaders' contestation of RME as a multi-faith syllabus. The Ministry of Education changed its policy of replacing BK with RME in Malawi secondary schools and announced a dual-mode RE curriculum of BK and RME through a circular letter as follows:

You may wish to recall that there was a directive to withhold the implementation of Junior Secondary School Religious and Moral Education Syllabus. The directive further recommended the formation of a National Consultative Committee, comprising of all stakeholders involved in the teaching of religious education in secondary schools in the country, to deliberate on the introduction of the new Religious and Moral Education (RME), which was to replace Bible Knowledge (BK) according to the new Junior Secondary Curriculum. This directive was made in response to complaints from some religious organizations that they were not consulted when the decision to introduce Religious and Moral Education and remove Bible Knowledge was made.

I am pleased to inform you that the consultative committee finally resolved that a revised Religious and Moral Education and a revised Bible Knowledge be offered as optional subjects in government, grant-aided and private schools and that all schools shall observe the right of the student/learner and/or indeed of his/her parent to choose the religious instruction subject of his/her choice as provided by the Republic of Malawi and the Education Act.

Head teachers are strongly advised not to force any pupil to study any of these subjects without consent of the pupil ... I should be very grateful if

⁷³ Ibid.

the contents of this letter will be made known to all members of staff and pupils.⁷⁴

It can be argued that the dual-mode RE curriculum policy came into effect as a compromise following consultations at national level. It successfully finessed the contestation to RME by the Christian religious leaders through the introduction of two syllabuses of RE: one single-faith and the other multi-faith. In a sense, Christianity is somewhat privileged in dual-mode RE since it is covered in both the BK and RME syllabuses reflecting the continued influence of Christian religious authority in Malawi's national RE curriculum.⁷⁵

However, one question can be posed here: why did the Christian religious leaders not contest multi-faith RE when it was introduced in primary teacher-training colleges in 1987⁷⁶ and primary schools in 1991⁷⁷ but did so when it was introduced at secondary school level in 2000? A probable reason could be that they were not aware of the earlier change. However, documentary evidence shows that Christian faith-communities were aware of and familiar with, the change at primary educational level. They had even sent representatives to participate in the consultations leading to the adoption of the multi-faith RE in some countries in East and Central Africa.⁷⁸ Another probable reason could be that although the Christian religious leaders had been part of the consultations, they did not agree with the

⁷⁴ T.R. O'Dala, Circular letter to stakeholders in education on "Junior Secondary School Religious and Moral Education and Bible Knowledge," Lilongwe: Ministry of Education, 25. 05.2001.

⁷⁵ Aspects of Christianity are covered in both the BK and RME syllabus while aspects of Islam and African Traditional Religions are only covered in the RME syllabus.

⁷⁶ Isabel A. Phiri, "Report of the East and Central Africa Inter-Church Consultation;" and "Report on the Fifth Consultation on Religious Education."

⁷⁷ Ministry of Education. *Primary School Teaching Syllabus: Religious Education Standards 1-8*, Domasi: Malawi Institute of Education, 1991.

⁷⁸ Phiri, "Report of the East and Central Africa Inter-Church Consultation,"

proposed change to multi-faith RE but had failed to state that position then. But why did they fail?

Whatever reason may be given, one question still remains: why did Christian religious leaders contest the multi-faith RE in 2000? Malawi's political history can offer a probable explanation. From independence in 1964 up to 1993, Malawi had been under one-party dictatorship that repressed any contestation of government policy. People with different views were labelled political enemies or dissidents.⁷⁹ Under that political atmosphere, it was probably difficult for the Christian religious leaders to contest government policy of changing from single-faith to multi-faith RE.⁸⁰ In that sense, it can be argued that although they did not support multi-faith RE, the Christian religious leaders were not free then to express their contestation. For one thing, doing so would have been deemed socially divisive in the midst of government's effort to promote national unity among people of diverse religious orientations. Thus, probably they kept silent for fear of political repression.⁸¹

However, in 1994 a multi-party democratic government came to power and ushered in a new era of freedoms based on principles of human rights and social justice. Even then, the Christian religious leaders did not contest multi-faith RE that had already been introduced at primary education level. A probable reason here could be that contestation was difficult for them just after the democratic government had come to power which would be seen as violating the very principles of democracy and social justice by denying other religions space in the school curriculum. Apparently, the Christian religious leaders found it easy to contest the multi-faith RE curriculum in 2000 on the premise of lack of consultation by the

⁷⁹ K.M. Phiri and K.R. Ross, "Introduction: From Totalitarianism to Democracy in Malawi," in K.M Phiri and K. R Ross (eds), *Democratisation in Malawi: A Stocktaking*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1998, pp. 9-18.

⁸⁰ M.F. Salanjira, "Contesting Spaces in Curriculum Policy Change."

⁸¹ Phiri and Ross, "Introduction."

Ministry of Education. Another probable reason could be that by 1994 the Christian religious leaders had forgotten about the issue of multi-faith RE only to be reminded about it with the introduction of RME in 2000.⁸²

Whatever the reason for the contestation was, the introduction of RME was in line with the multi-faith curriculum reform that had already started at primary education level. The spokesperson of the Ministry of Education justified multi-faith RE in the *Nation* newspaper as follows: "the move is an ongoing process started in primary school some time back and has now been elevated to secondary school."⁸³ One insight here is that whilst contestation is inevitable in any curriculum policy change due to different ideological positions of social actors, Christian religious leaders' contestation of multi-faith RE was in some way influenced by the history of education in Malawi. From an *elites' theory* perspective, it reflected an instance where government educational ideologies were in conflict with those of the Christian religious leaders as important stakeholders in education. Whereas the government was in search of RE suitable for Malawi's pluralist and multi-faith society, the Christian religious leaders wanted RE that served their religious agenda - the promotion of the Christian faith as the main purpose of the Christian church investment in Malawi.⁸⁴

Furthermore, it can be argued that the position of the Christian religious leaders could be a reflection of conservatism which is hardly surprising as "in many fields social movements wish to hold on to what they see as the gains of the past."⁸⁵ This may explain why the Christian religious leaders contested multi-faith RE at secondary

⁸² Salanjira, "Contesting Spaces in Curriculum Policy Change."

⁸³ P. Semu, "New Subject on Curriculum," *The Nation*, 01.02.2000, p. 3.

⁸⁴ Minutes of the First National Consultative Meeting.

⁸⁵ R. Hatcher, and K. Jones, "Researching Resistance: Campaigns against Academics in England," *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 54(3), 2006, p. 338.

school level. It was probably an attempt to defend the gains the teaching of single-faith RE had already made in schools. In a sense, it reflected some failure to reconcile rival values and beliefs and to accommodate competing ways of life within a single society, without imposing a single way of life on everyone.⁸⁶

Another insight here can be the Christian religious leaders' contestation of multi-faith RE as a reflection of politics of the school curriculum regarding the teaching of RE in schools. As Lawton argues, when a curriculum becomes controversial, it is essentially a political controversy reflecting two interrelated issues: the distribution of knowledge in society and the decision-making involved.⁸⁷ In some way, the Christian religious leaders' contestation of RME was about which knowledge of or about religion was to be distributed in schools and how such a decision was made. Commenting on the political nature of education as a whole, Apple observes that:

"Education must be seen as a political act. To do this, we need to think relationally. That is, understanding education requires that we situate it back into the unequal relations of power in the large society and into the relations of dominance and subordination – and the conflicts to change these things – that are generated by these relations."⁸⁸

From an *elites' theory* perspective, the Christian religious leaders' contestation of multi-faith RE in Malawi should be situated in the unequal relations of power as well as relations of dominance and subordination between Christianity and other religions. A genealogy of RE in Malawi shows that such relations have characterized the history of education in Malawi from the time Christian missionaries

⁸⁶ J.A. Scorza, "Facing up to Civic Pluralism: a Friendly Critique of Galston," *Theory and Research in Education*, 4(3), 2006, pp. 291-311.

⁸⁷ D. Lawton, *The Politics of the School Curriculum*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1980.

⁸⁸ M.W. Apple, "Can Schooling Contribute to a More Just Society?" *Education, Citizenship, and Social Justice*, 3(3), 2008, p. 241.

introduced Western formal education with the main aim of evangelization.

Furthermore, the dual-mode RE curriculum of BK and RME reflects such unequal relations of power and their resultant relations of dominance and subordination with respect to Christianity and other religions in Malawi. The BK syllabus has a narrow approach to the teaching of religion since it is based on the scripture of one religion, Christianity. Although there is no apparent aim of converting the learners, it can be argued that the underlying motivation is promotion of knowledge and understanding of Christianity only. Its exclusion of other religions reflects the domination of Christianity over other religions found in Malawi.

Furthermore, it can be argued that, except in a very limited sense, it would be difficult to show how an exclusivist approach to RE supported by Christian religious leaders would help learners develop critical knowledge and understanding of what religion is, let alone skills needed to dialogue across different religions. Because of BK's narrow scope, learners can only have limited knowledge and understanding of what it means to be a member of religion and how religion affects the world and society in which we live.⁸⁹ The exclusion of other religions in a democratic and religiously diverse society is, in itself, problematic, given the increasingly pluralistic nature of our contemporary society.⁹⁰ As Jackson observes, it also reflects challenges of using RE to promote social and community cohesion.⁹¹

⁸⁹ G. Read, J. Rudge, G. Teece and R.B. Howarth (eds), *The Westhill Project RE 5-16: How Do I Teach RE*, Leckhampton: Stanley Thornes, 1982.

⁹⁰ Slattery, *Curriculum Development in the Postmodern Era*.

⁹¹ R. Jackson, "Religious Education and Social and Community Cohesion: an Exploration of Challenges and Opportunities," *British Journal of Religious Education*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2012, pp. 101-104.

Justifying the Rationale of Multi-Faith RE

The Christian religious leaders' contestation of RME syllabus meant resisting its multi-faith rationale. The syllabus seeks to help learners develop social and life skills such as cultural literacy and civic tolerance which are essential skills for citizenship in democratic and pluralistic societies. The rationale for RME is framed within Malawi's socio-political context and takes into account the social and political changes besetting Malawi. For instance, it reads in part, as follows:

Religious and Moral Studies is wider than Bible Knowledge since the old subject only covered the Bible, but the thinking is that society is entitled to learn and know all the religions that are in the country and not Christianity only.⁹²

The rationale recognises Malawi's religious diversity and the need for a democratic and united citizenry.⁹³ It has the potential to enable learners develop religious literacy and critical knowledge and understanding of religion as an important dimension of human and social life.⁹⁴

As Lealman observes: "an important part of RE is the development of attitudes such as tolerance and appreciation of religions and cultures different from one's own; sensitivity to social problems and human needs; awareness of human values."⁹⁵

By teaching more religions on an equal basis, learners can develop critical knowledge and understanding of religion. It is one of the

⁹² Ministry of Education, *Malawi Junior Secondary School Teaching Syllabus: Religious and Moral Education*, p. iv.

⁹³ Banks, *Educating Citizens in a Multicultural Society*.

⁹⁴ D. Carr, "Religious Education, Religious Literacy and Common Schooling: a Philosophy and History of Skewed Reflection," *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 41(4), 2007, pp. 659-673.

⁹⁵ Lealman, "Affectivity," in J. M. Sutcliffe (ed), *A Dictionary of Religious Education*, London: SCM Press Ltd. 1984, p. 10.

strategies for reconciliation pedagogy in a diverse society.⁹⁶ Commenting on the potential of multi-faith RE for cultivating positive life skills, Chidester et al observe that: "If based on clear educational aims, rather than a religious agenda, multi-tradition programmes can promote a range of secondary benefits, such as a greater understanding of self and others, the clarification of values, cultural literacy, and civil toleration of differences. The primary aim of a multi-tradition approach, however, is to provide students with an opportunity to learn about religion by studying actual religions."⁹⁷

It can be argued that the Christian religious leaders' contestation of multi-faith RE reveals that their rationale for RE was different from that of the multi-faith RE. As observed by Carr the "discourse of educational debate is never neutral. However covertly and however implicitly, it always promotes some educational values and marginalizes others."⁹⁸ In a sense, the support for BK and opposition to RME positions the RE curriculum as a battleground of competing ideologies and influences regarding the teaching of religion in Malawi. From an *elites' theory* perspective, the dual-mode RE was introduced as a compromise between competing demands by Christian religious leaders and Ministry of Education. As such, it can be argued that, it was among other imperatives, a response to the continuing ideological influence of the Christian religious leaders on Malawi's national RE curriculum. While the Ministry of Education supported the change to multi-faith RE, the Christian religious leaders favoured single-faith RE.

⁹⁶ A. Ferreira, "Postcards from the Edge: Exploring Multimodal Strategies for Reconciliation Pedagogy," *Southern African Review of Education*, 14(3), 2008, pp. 37-54.

⁹⁷ Chidester, Mitchell, Omar and Phiri, *Religion in Public Education*, p. 45.

⁹⁸ W. Carr, "Philosophy and Education," in W. Carr (ed), *The Routledge Falmer Reader in Philosophy of Education*, 2005, p. 35.

Furthermore, as Fullan argues, any curriculum reform initiative must have a theory of what it seeks to do at an educational level.⁹⁹ By having BK and RME syllabuses at the same time, Malawi's education system reflects a case of competing ideologies of RE. For BK, the ideology is mono-faith favouring only Christianity to be taught in schools while for RME, the ideology is multi-faith; recognizing that since there are many religions, RE should enable learners to understand religion in its diversity as a strategy for reconciliation pedagogy and unity in diversity. The contestation of multi-faith RE rationale reflects that religious pluralism in Malawi is a theological challenge for the Christian religious leaders who continue to exert their influence on Malawi's national RE curriculum.¹⁰⁰

Furthermore, it can be argued that while accommodating demands by the Christian religious leaders, the dual-mode RE is an act of facing up to civic pluralism.¹⁰¹ It was an attempt by the Ministry of Education to promote a level of religious toleration essential for maintaining peace with the Christian religious leaders. In his theory of *liberalism*, Scorza calls for a "recognition and toleration of multiple reasonable conceptions of good citizenship rather than advancing ... a robust but unitary view of citizenship and civic education."¹⁰² Having BK and RME at the same time could be seen as such an attempt in view of Malawi's religious diversity and demands by the Christian religious leaders. It also reflects the continued influence of Christian religious authority in Malawi's education.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ M. Fullan, *Change Forces*, London: The Falmer Press, 1993.

¹⁰⁰ James Tengatenga, "Religious Pluralism in Malawi: a Challenge for the Church," *Religion in Malawi*, No. 7, 1997, pp. 16-23.

¹⁰¹ Scorza, *Facing up to Civic Pluralism*.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p. 291.

¹⁰³ R. Sookrajh and M.F. Salanjira, "Contesting Spaces for Implementation: (Im)possibilities of Religious Education Curriculum Policy for Secondary Schools in Malawi," *Perspectives in Education*, Vol. 27, No. 1, 2009, pp. 19-29.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the influence of Christian religious authority in Malawi's Education by examining the trajectory of RE from 1875 to 2018. Employing a *genealogical analysis* within the framework of hegemony and elites' theory, the continued influence of Christian religious leaders in Malawi's RE national curriculum has been described. An evidence base for such influence in the context of their contestation of multi-faith RE has been presented. The argument is that Christian churches established schools first and foremost as agents of evangelization and conversion. To that end, Christian religious leaders have opposed the teaching of other religions apart from Christianity in their schools. It is for this reason that in the year 2000 they used their religious authority as elites to contest replacing BK as a single-faith syllabus with RME as a multi-faith syllabus, leading to the introduction of the dual-mode RE curriculum based on both syllabuses in Malawi's secondary schools in 2001.

African Agency amongst Malawian Neocharismatics

Felix Chimera Nyika

Introduction

Professor McCracken observed that the reemergence of independent churches in the late 1920s in northern Malawi was an example of African agency in the interwar years that was precipitated, amongst other factors, by "a growing disillusionment with some aspects of the Christian message, as propagated by European missionaries."¹ This chapter shows that Malawian Neocharismatic Churches, are a post-colonial example of an African religious movement that has contextualized Christianity to their worldview and are significantly different in their history and praxis from both Pentecostal churches and the Charismatic movement that they deserve their own typology hence the appellation Neocharismatic.²

A Malawian Religious Social Movement

Several attempts have been made at applying sociological theories to Pentecostal-Charismatic movements such as modernization-secularization, relative deprivation, and globalization but the Neocharismatic Movement should be seen as an African religious movement. The Modernization-Secularization theory asserts that modernization occurs when a society is transformed from a pre-modern, pre-

¹ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi, 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, 2nd edition, Zomba: Kachere, 2008, p. 328.

² By agency I mean "individual capacity for free thought and action"; by structure I mean "the constraints on individuals that result from the fact that repeated patterns of actions, legitimated by ideologies, form the environment that shapes us and limits our actions," Steve Bruce and Steven Yearly, *The Sage Dictionary of Sociology*, London: Sage, 2006, p. 7.

industrial economy to a modern economy which includes: increased urbanization; worker migration from agriculture to industry; increased literacy; increased access to political participation; change of knowledge base from traditional to scientific; and, increased individuation, anomie, and alienation.³ Modernization is usually complemented by secularization which is characterized by: the separation of religious and social institutions, ideological and cultural differentiation, decline in religiosity, and lesser individual commitment to religious institutions and the impact religious institutions have on the totality of identity. While modernization deals with the social aspects, secularization deals with the cultural so that as modernizing societies become more pluralistic, religious commitment goes down. However, this theory has been challenged by the fact of the proliferation of religion in many societies that are modernizing such as those in Africa, Latin America, and Asia. In fact, Pentecostals and Charismatics can be deemed postmodern in their embrace of aspects of both primitive religion as well as modern technology.

Deprivation theory sees the genesis of Pentecostal-Charismatic movements as based on human need. Marxist interpretations highlight economic deprivation since religion is seen as "the opiate of the masses" that dulls the pain of life; Freudian explanations focus on anxiety about death since religion is an escape mechanism for the weak who need a crutch. Followers of Émile Durkheim focus on the need for social stability and view religion as a means of maintaining social order especially in a "primitive" society.⁴ Relative deprivation,

³ J.W. Shepperd, "Sociology of World Pentecostalism," in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, rev. and exp., Stanley M. Burgess (ed), Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003, pp. 1083-1090 [1084-1085].

⁴ Donald E. Miller and Tetsunao Yamamori, *Global Pentecostalism: The New Face of Christian Social Engagement*, Berkeley: University of California, 2007, p. 22.

a related theory, asserts that people and groups compare their upward social mobility relative to other people or groups and that the relative effects of deprivation are felt, not by those of the lowest classes, but by those with the potential to rise but who fail to do so or do so slowly.⁵ Deprivation is the theoretical framework of Chakanza who utilizes a political variation of the deprivation theory when he asserts that: "Given the political set-up of a one-party state, opportunities for influencing others are most easily available within the context of religion."⁶ Van Dijk echoes the same line of thought when he deems the evangelistic endeavours of the "young puritan preachers in post-independence Malawi" as contending for "intellectual space" within the confines of a gerontocratic one-party state in Kamuzu Banda's Malawi in the late 1980s.⁷ Responding to van Dijk, Klaus Fiedler queries why there was no decline in the Born-Again phenomenon after 1994 when Malawi became a multi-party state.⁸ Further, Fiedler notes that these theories fail to explain both the rapid proliferation of Pentecostalism in developing countries like Malawi where the majority of the population are poor, both Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal, and the increasing numbers of Neocharismatics who tend to be urban and middle-class.⁹

The inadequacies of the preceding theories based on Social Darwinism led to a further development, the globalization

⁵ J.W. Shepperd, "Sociology of World Pentecostalism," in *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, rev. and exp., Stanley M. Burgess (ed), Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003, pp. 1083-1090 [1085].

⁶ J.C. Chakanza, "The Independency Alternative: A Historical Survey," *Religion in Malawi*, No. 4, February 1994, pp. 32-42 [38].

⁷ Richard A. van Dijk. "Young Puritan Preachers in Post-independence Malawi," *Africa*, Vol. 62, No. 2, 1992, pp. 159-181.

⁸ Klaus Fiedler, "The Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements in Malawi in Cultural Perspective," *Religion in Malawi*, No. 9, Nov 1999, pp. 27-38, [35].

⁹ Ibid.

discourse.¹⁰ Globalization not only transfers economic goods but also ideological and cultural goods – technology, political ideas, and religion – notwithstanding the presence of local animosity against foreign cultural influence so that local variations of such goods occur, made from a synthesis of the local and the imported materials.¹¹ Paul Gifford was an early champion of this viewpoint seeing Southern African Born-again movements as instruments of the American Religious Right through their alliance with American missionary organizations. He views this as a process of Americanization, not Christianization, whose Christian Fundamentalist message was designed to transform the African socio-political situation.¹² Harri Englund evaluates claims to independency by two Pentecostal (Neo-charismatic) churches in the township of Chinsapo in Lilongwe as religious extraversion – a means of utilizing international links to access resources for growth and consolidation of a local movement and its leaders – which satisfies their ambitions to be a part of the global community thereby escaping Africa's marginalization in the world.¹³ Anderson surmises that the globalization-Americanization theory is really a conspiracy theory that fails to comprehend that Pentecostalism is more concerned with practice than ideology or theology, that the local-international relationship is of such an eclectic nature that not only does the local party access international resources but the international party uses the local party to boost its

¹⁰ See J.W. Shepperd, "Sociology of World Pentecostalism," in Stanley M. Burgess (ed), *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*, rev. and exp., Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2003, pp. 1083-1090 [1087].

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² David Maxwell comments on this in his, *African Gifts of the Spirit: Pentecostalism and the Rise of a Zimbabwean Transnational Religious Movement*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2006, pp. 11.

¹³ Harri Englund, "Christian Independency and Global Membership: Pentecostal Extraversions in Malawi," *Journal of Religion in Africa*, Vol. 33 No. 1, pp. 83-111.

international image and financial sponsorship base. "Globalization" of Pentecostalism should be understood in terms of its geographical extent, and, that "globalization" is both defined and limited by the local context so that it is "reinterpreted and conditioned by the social and religio-cultural context" making the "Americanization" claims seem implausible.¹⁴

Suffice it to say that such naturalistic analyses of Pentecostalism that do not take religious experience seriously are inadequate in explicating it. Klaus Fiedler argues that "a religious phenomenon should first of all be seen and interpreted as such."¹⁵ The participants' own interpretation of their activities as religious requires that a researcher into the phenomenon must allow the religious aspect to take prominence though not to the exclusion of the socio-political and cultural milieu.

Neocharismatic churches may be seen as a subset of a larger religious movement that has fluid boundaries and membership comprising of Classical Pentecostals, Protestant and Catholic Charismatics, and other African Independent Churches which hold a similar worldview. Together they comprise a religious social movement that is "engaged in by persons attempting to make sense of, and thus bring cognitive order to, a complex and sometimes hostile world."¹⁶ The movement is mostly urban owing to its beginnings in urban revivalism in the cities of Malawi but is increasingly becoming rural as well. Other churches begin their lives in the rural areas such as Bishop M.B. Pondamali's New Testament Assembly of God headquartered in Msundwe, Lilongwe with 33 churches in the central region and 14

¹⁴ Allan Anderson, "The Globalization of Pentecostalism and the Reshaping of Christianity in the Twenty-First Century," paper presented at the 2002 Commission Meeting of the Churches' Commission on Mission, Bangor/Wales, 14-16.9.2002.

¹⁵ Klaus Fiedler, "The Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements," p. 36.

¹⁶ Shepperd, "Sociology of World Pentecostalism," p. 1084. He quotes R.H. Turner and L.M. Killian, *Collective Behaviour*, 1957.

in Mozambique. This urban concentration has been misconstrued by detractors as part of their focus on wealth because they do not want to minister in poor rural areas. However, most of these churches are relatively small, in their pioneering phase, and incapable of sustaining a rural mission as they are barely surviving. Moreover, even Pauline mission strategy was to target cities and then move into the rural areas having established a city-base.

Rooting the Faith in the African Soil – Dealing with Ufiti

Neocharismatics take seriously the African worldview and experience and thereby have contextualized Christianity in the African soil by deconstructing the naturalistic missionary Christianity worldview with their embrace of both traditional and modern socio-cultural elements. Van Breugel observed that Chewa religion functioned to support people through suffering as it offered an explanation for it and acted as a coping mechanism.¹⁷ His survey of 451 deaths ascertained that death was attributed to human evil or witchcraft/sorcery (296), natural diseases (38), spirits of the deceased (9), and God (48).

However, the Christianity that Western missionaries proclaimed had what Hiebert called "the flaw of the excluded middle," a naturalistic worldview that makes a false dichotomy between the spiritual and the physical.¹⁸ Hiebert traced this to the West's adoption of a Platonic dualism in the 17th and 18th centuries that resulted in "the secularization of science and the mystification of religion" which effectively created an "excluded middle" in which there was a disconnect between the mystical world of religion with its faith, visions, and dreams and that of science which is based on "certitude of experience, experimentation, and proof." It is this insensitivity to the

¹⁷ J.W.M. Van Breugel, *Chewa Traditional Religion*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 2001, p. 267.

¹⁸ Paul G. Hiebert, "The Flaw of the Excluded Middle," *Missiology: An International Review*, Vol. X, No. 1, 1982, p. 43.

African worldview, such as in the area of dreams, that Fulata Moyo argues was one of the precipitating factors for the emergence of AICs.¹⁹

On the other hand, "the bipolarity of the Charismatic Movement" spans both traditional and modern socio-cultural elements, according to Rhodian Munyenembe, who hails this as the key to the movement's popularity since these churches address issues such as witchcraft and spirit-possession while simultaneously responding to modern issues with street children ministries, electronic music, and entrepreneurial seminars.²⁰ This sensitivity to the African worldview is evident in Neocharismatics' concern, in some cases preoccupation, with issues of witchcraft, healing, and prosperity. It is noteworthy that van Breugel recorded about 65% of deaths (296 of 451) in his catchment area to have been attributed to *ufiti* (witchcraft).²¹

Furthermore, modernization has not eradicated this ancient belief amongst Malawians as can be adduced from witchcraft stories that constantly feature in the media to the point that the Malawi Law Commission is in the process of reviewing the archaic Anti-Witchcraft Act of 1911.²² In Area 18A, Lilongwe, many mothers

¹⁹ Fulata L. Moyo, "Dreams in the Christian Churches in Africa," *Religion in Malawi*, No. 4, 1994, p. 22.

²⁰ Rhodian Munyenembe, "Christianity and Socio-Cultural Issues: An Evaluation of the Charismatic Movement's Contribution towards the Contextualization of the Gospel in Malawi," MA, University of Malawi, 2006, p. 86.

²¹ Van Breugel, *Chewa Traditional Religion*, p. 227.

²² Witchcraft Act Cap 7:02 of the Laws of Malawi was enacted on 12th May 1911 with the aim of eradicating what the colonial government perceived to be dangerous acts such as trial by ordeal, the use of charms and witchcraft itself. The framers of the Act assumed that witchcraft does not exist and made it an offence to accuse a person of practicing witchcraft and to claim to practice it, see the Malawi Law Commission's *Witchcraft Act Review Programme: Issues Paper*, [www.lawcom.mw/index.htm?http%3A //www.lawcom.mw/reports.htm](http://www.lawcom.mw/index.htm?http%3A%2F%2Fwww.lawcom.mw%2Freports.htm), [22.3.2010].

made their way to the late Apostle Nellie Chigamba's house, where they would take their children in suspected instances of witchcraft (*ufiti*).²³ For Nеоcharismatics like the apostle, witchcraft is a real force that torments people and can be entered into knowingly or unknowingly. She narrates how once parents brought as many as thirty children for deliverance from witchcraft who were part of a group being trained in witchcraft by an elderly person in the community. The deliverance process begins with a prayer of "receiving" Jesus in which the person renounces his/her involvement in witchcraft and covenants to follow Christ. This is followed by asking the person what animal they transform into when they go to "play" (*kutamba*) with the intention of exorcising the demon that masquerades as the animal. Usually the person manifests the character of the animal during exorcism if they have so advanced in witchcraft to the point of morphing into an animal. Sometimes the adult accompanying the child narrates the child's history; sometimes the person praying discerns what manner of spirit to exorcise and how to pray for the victim. She admits that there are times when the intercessors are not successful in deliverance either because the person is not willing or they have met formidable Satanic power at which point they recommend other more gifted ministers to the person.

Closely related to *ufiti* is "Satanism" which involves human sacrifices and drinking blood as forms of worshipping Satan. Underlying all this is the belief in an omnipotent God who is greater than *ufiti*. However, the people administering the exorcism are supposed to be born-again and baptized in the Holy Spirit who believe in God's ability to destroy demonic spirits. When asked about the pending amendment to the Witchcraft Act, Apostle Chigamba stated that arresting sinners is not the solution to the issue but asking God to raise intercessors with the gift of discernment of spirits to

²³ Int. Nellie Chigamba, apostle, Area 18, Lilongwe, 10.3.2010.

combat this spiritual issue.²⁴ On what should be done to the elderly person who is accused of teaching children witchcraft, she said that the person needs prayer for deliverance. Furthermore, when asked about why witches target other people's children when it is said that traditionally witches teach their own blood-relatives, she answered that it might be that the kingdom of darkness is also on a similar campaign as God's kingdom to "win" as many people to its side.

Notwithstanding the dangers of what Opoku Onyina terms "witch demonology," the amalgam of African traditional views on witchcraft and Western teachings on demonology that incorporates generational curses and territorial spirits, there are positive aspects to witch-demonology as it solves the problem of those that are fearful of ancestral spirits, generational curses, and witches. This, of course, is not a claim that all Neocharismatic healing claims are true or efficacious as some claims have been proven to be false.²⁵ Hence the Neocharismatic practice of deliverance from witchcraft, evil spirits, curses, sicknesses, and poverty has contextualized the Christian faith to the African soil.

A Third Wave of African Agency – Not Pentecostal or Charismatic but Neocharismatic

Neocharismatic churches are the third wave of African ecclesiastical initiatives beginning with African Independent Churches, African Indigenous Churches, and can be termed African Initiated Churches that should not be confused with the Charismatic or Pentecostal movements. African Independent Churches, also called Ethiopian or African (c. 1900) are the first wave. The Ethiopian/African Churches, for whom independence from missionary domination was an issue and therefore the term African Independent Churches is most apt, arose as a political and administrative reaction

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Klaus Fiedler, *Fake Healing Claims for HIV/AIDS in Malawi*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2016, p. 20.

to European mission churches in the early part of the 1900s. They have vestiges of their European ecclesiastical pedigree: such as infant baptism, reading liturgies, translated European hymns, European-style clerical garb, church organization, hermeneutics, and minimal emotionalism during services. They have fewer restrictions than other AICs regarding dietary laws, use of medicines, and alcohol consumption. Though the words "African" or "Ethiopian" are usually absent in their names, they have an implicit "Ethiopian" ideology that sees God's preferential treatment of Africa in Scripture (Psalm 68:31; Acts 8) as well as celebrates Ethiopia's successful resistance of European colonialism when she defeated Italy in the Battle of Adwa. Chakanza observes the political radicalism of these pioneering independent churches in Malawi, such as: John Chilembwe's Providence Industrial Mission which started in 1900 in Chiradzulu; Elliot Kamwana's Watch Tower Movement which was founded around 1909 in Nkhata Bay; Charles Domingo's African Seventh Day Baptist which began between 1907 and 1910 in the realm of the Livingstonia Synod in northern Malawi; Simon Kadewere's Church of Christ which was initiated in Zomba in 1910; and, Philipo Chinyama's Church of Christ which began in 1910 in Ntcheu.²⁶ Achewa Providence Industrial Mission, an offshoot of Chilembwe's PIM, would also fit into this category.²⁷ Jordan Msumba's the Last Church of God and His Christ, which started in 1916, chronologically fits into this category though he did not secede from a missionary church but was connected to Elliot Kamwana and Joseph Booth.²⁸

²⁶ J.C. Chakanza, "The Independency Alternative: A Historical Survey," *Religion in Malawi*, No. 4, February 1994, pp. 32-33.

²⁷ Hany Longwe, *Identity by Dissociation: A History of the Achewa Providence Industrial Mission*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013.

²⁸ Wezi Makuni Gondwe, *A History of the Last Church of God and His Christ*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2018, pp. 25, 28.

African Indigenous Churches or Prophet-healing/Spiritual Churches are the largest AIC grouping elsewhere on the continent though not in Malawi.²⁹ They emphasize spiritual power; have their historical and theological roots in western Pentecostalism though they diverged from these; have diverse liturgies and theologies which can only be deciphered from their practices as they do not have formal dogmas; use symbolic objects such as blessed water, ropes, ash, and staffs, for healing prayers; have prohibitions against alcohol, tobacco, and pork; are more tolerant of traditional practices such as ancestor rituals and polygyny; and usually wear uniforms such as white robes or military-style khakis. It seems that the prophetic-healing element has not been emphasized in indigenous Malawian AICs in the pre-Charismatic Revival period. Wishlade noted this absence of prophets in his study of AICs in Mulanje and Chikwawa districts between 1958 and 1959.³⁰ Early forms of these churches in the country were the *Atchona* churches initiated by leaders who imported the prophetic-healing element from elsewhere.

African Initiated Churches or Neocharismatic Churches (c. 1970s) are the third wave. They are newer but tend to be the largest and most influential organizations in their countries as is the case in Malawi.³¹ They have benefitted from an influx of members from the older European mission-founded churches and the prophet-healing churches in the past two decades. They are described as African

²⁹ Chakanza, "The Independency Alternative," pp. 32-33.

³⁰ R.L. Wishlade, *Sectarianism in Southern Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press 1965, p. 45.

³¹ Ulf Strohhorn, "A List of Pentecostal and Charismatic Churches in Malawi," Zomba: University of Malawi, Department of Theology and Religious Studies, Postgraduate Colloquium, 2000, pp. 3-6, notes how they comprise the fastest growing segment of Malawian Pentecostal and Charismatic churches in which Atchona churches had upward of five denominations, missionary-initiated Pentecostal churches had upward of 23 denominations, Charismatic fellowships and denominations had upward of five denominations, while independent charismatic denominations had upward of 60 denominations.

Initiated Churches which neither questions nor presupposes their independence from foreign influence (as in African Independent Churches) nor their indigenouslyness (as in African Indigenous Churches) but simply points to the genesis by Africans.³² They emphasize the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit. They are, to varying extents, influenced by North American Pentecostalism in leadership patterns, liturgy and, the "prosperity" message; are founded by charismatic, well-educated (though not necessarily in theology), and younger people renowned for their homiletic and leadership prowess. They also oppose traditional practices, consumption of tobacco and alcohol, and symbolic healing objects. They tend to have a younger, more formally educated, and less impoverished membership who are viewed by the older AICs as attacking African values.

Klaus Fiedler questions the validity of the qualities of "independent" and "instituted" in the discussion of Neocharismatic churches when they are clearly different from the earlier AICs.³³ Others call them the New Apostolic Reformation Churches, Independent Pentecostal Churches, New Pentecostal Churches, Charismatic Churches, or even Independent Charismatic of Pentecostal Churches.³⁴ I prefer to call such churches Neocharismatic as opposed

³² Allan H. Anderson, *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century*, Trenton: Africa World Press, 2001.

³³ Fiedler, "The Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements," p. 37.

³⁴ C. Peter Wagner calls them the New Apostolic Reformation, (*Churchquake! How the New Apostolic Reformation is Shaking the Church as we Know it*, Ventura, California: Regal, 1999). Allan Anderson first called them Independent Pentecostal Churches in *Bazalwane, African Pentecostals in South Africa*, Pretoria: University of South Africa, 1992, but later changed to New Pentecostal Churches (NPC) in *African Reformation: African Initiated Christianity in the 20th Century*, Trenton: Africa World Press, 2001. Klaus Fiedler calls them Charismatic Churches ("The Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements in Malawi in Cultural Perspective," *Religion in Malawi*, No. 9, November 1999, pp. 27-38). Ulf Strohschneier, *Pentecostalism in Malawi: A History of the Apostolic Faith Mission in Malawi, Zomba*, Malawi: Kachere,

to Charismatic since the Charismatic revivalism did not result in new churches or denominations but rather renewal movements within existing ecclesiastical structures.

Neocharismatics in Malawi are not Pentecostal for several reasons. Historically, they come from a different revival background, the Blantyre Born-Again Awakening of the 1970s and 1980s, while Pentecostals hail from the 1906 Pentecostal Azusa Street Revival from which Malawi's *Matchona* Pentecostalism hails. Ecclesiologically, they believe in the continuing offices of apostles and prophets while Pentecostals and Charismatics believe such offices ceased though the gifts continue hence they are partial cessationists when it comes to these offices. Sociologically, they are an urban phenomenon that began in Blantyre and spread to rural areas whereas the first Pentecostal churches such as Apostolic Faith Mission and Assemblies of God began in rural areas when Pentecostalized *matchona* (migrant workers) returned to their villages from Zimbabwe and South Africa.³⁵ Organizationally, they are led by charismatic as opposed to bureaucratic leaders, both in the theological and sociological sense, while Pentecostal denominations are governed by elected officials.

Historical Development and Types of Neocharismatic Churches

The 1970s and early 1980s were a season of revival in Malawi's urban centres beginning with the Blantyre Spiritual Awakening.³⁶ This revival was fanned by both Evangelical and Pentecostal cross-pollination through the cooperation of church and parachurch

2005, pp. 11, calls them "independent charismatic or pentecostal denominations" and sees them as offshoots of the *matchona* (returned migrant worker) or mission-initiated churches.

³⁵ Ulf Strohehn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi*.

³⁶ Bright Kawamba, *The Blantyre Spiritual Awakening and its Music*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2018.

organizations. It was from this ferment of revival that Neocharismatic churches emerged.³⁷ Klaus Fiedler has noted their evolutionary pattern from an initial interdenominational phase, to a fellowship phase, to a ministry phase, and, finally, to a Neocharismatic church.³⁸ I would venture a further development from the church phase to an apostolic network, and/or, in a few cases, a Neocharismatic denomination and that the phenomenon can be categorized into two types.

Developmental Phases

Interdenominational phase is the first stage for the development of Neocharismatic churches which began in the Blantyre Born-again Revivalism. It began as an alliance of church and para church organizations that sought to stem the tide of liberal theology in the Malawian church by aggressive evangelism which led to the formation of the Evangelical Fellowship of Malawi (EFM) in 1961 and to the first Keswick Convention in 1962.³⁹ Not satisfied with progress thus far, New Life for All (NLFA), the evangelistic arm of EFM under Jack Selfridge, began open-air gospel campaigns in the city of Blantyre in 1971.⁴⁰ Some of the organizations involved included SCOM, New Life for All, Every Home Crusade, and Keswick Convention. Churches also cooperated such as St. Columba

³⁷ The ensuing discussion is a condensation of chapter two of my thesis, "Apostleship amongst Malawian Neocharismatics," PhD, Mzuzu University, 2015, pp. 29-44

³⁸ Fiedler, "The Charismatic and Pentecostal Movements."

³⁹ Jack Selfridge, *Jack of All Trades Mastered by One*, p. 186.

⁴⁰ Bright Kawamba, "The Blantyre Spiritual Awakening 1969 to 1986: an Antecedent of the Charismatic Movement in Malawi," MA, University of Malawi, 2013. Kawamba, a participant in the revival, conducted 48 interviews with leaders and other participants of the movement and, as the more scholarly work than Selfridge's popular autobiography, pays more attention to the dates. For example, Kawamba asserts that the first meeting of the group was at Nkhoma Synod offices in April 1960, p. 3.

CCAP under Rev. Mkunga and Kanjedza Assemblies of God under Rev. Gideon Bomba.⁴¹

The second stage, the fellowship phase, developed when NLFA evangelistic groups set up preaching points in various parts of the city which further developed to be lunch-hour fellowships in commercial centres and prayer groups in the townships. Lunch-hour fellowships proliferated in the city from around 1974 in sites such as the NLFA offices on Livingstone Road, Malawi Railways Training Center in Limbe, and the Red Cross Hall at Ginnery Corner which spread into the townships of Blantyre. Kawamba observes that the Limbe fellowship had Emmanuel Chinkwita, Mary Ntaba, and Kamzati Chombo among its leaders whereas Wilson Chisambiro and a Mr. Mataya were foundational to the establishment of the Red Cross Hall fellowship.⁴² Selfridge also notes that the genesis of prayer groups in commercial and industrial areas in Blantyre began with two believers praying together during their lunch-break and the idea spread out so that there were as many as 450 involved in such prayers around the city.⁴³

The ministries phase is a third one. There were ministries that emerged from the fellowships and the evangelistic fervour of those years. Typically, such ministries would begin as followers would cluster around a strong leader with a specialized ministry call and together minister to the populace though never on Sunday mornings so as to ensure that every member was still a part of his/her local church. Andrew Gabriel's ministry was rife with miraculous occurrences from its very beginning in 1973 and caused a stir in

⁴¹ Gregory Chawanangwa Mvula and Enson Mbilikile Lwesya, *Flames of Fire: The History of the Assemblies of God and Pentecostalism in Malawi*, Blantyre: Assemblies of God Literature Centre, 2005, p. 168.

⁴² Bright Kawamba, "The Blantyre Spiritual Awakening."

⁴³ Jack Selfridge, *Jack of All Trades*, p. 192.

Blantyre townships of Soche East, Zingwangwa, Chimwankhunda, Chilobwe, and Naotcha.⁴⁴

The Neocharismatic church phase was many times fortuitous. Many ardent members of mainstream churches faced disciplinary action in their churches for being involved in the Born-Again movement especially the recalcitrants that espoused speaking in tongues and open-air preaching. This led to wrangles within churches. The case of Charismatic Presbyterians – who called themselves "Concerned Born-Again Christians" – and the Blantyre Synod of the Church of Central Africa, Presbyterian (CCAP) in the mid-1990s resulted in the formation of the Presbyterian Church of Malawi (PCM).⁴⁵ Roman Catholic priest Mark Kambalazaza was excommunicated from the church in 1998 due to his healing ministry to form a split-off, the Charismatic Redeemed Renewal Ministries International.⁴⁶ Even

⁴⁴ Int. Enoch Phiri, Country Director, African Enterprise, Lilongwe, 26.2.2010. Kawamba notes that Gabriel was given to visions of heaven and angels and sometimes took his group to pray and fast on Soche Mountain at times for days, p. 20.

⁴⁵ Rev Lovemore B.A.M. Chilangwe – Alembe Onse, Blantyre City Presbytery titled *Kuunikirana Pa Nkhani Ya Kubadwa Kwatsopano* (Born Again), 9.12.2019, p. 94 which when translated into English states that "being born again is not allowed and everyone who participates in these things should appear before a church court to receive due judgment" ("*za u BORN AGAIN si chinthu choledwa tsono aliyense ochita izi ayenera kuoneka pa bwalo ndi kulandira chiweruzo choyenera*") and that "being born again is not WEEPING or speaking in TONGUES but receiving Jesus and following His footsteps" ("*kubadwanso mwatsopano si "KULIRA" kapena kuyankhula mu "MALILIME" ayi koma kumulandira Yesu monga Ambuye ndikutsatira mapazi ake*") [emphasis his].

⁴⁶ Chifundo I.T. Mbewe, Mark Kambalazaza, a Clergyman with Charismatic Gifts: The Origin and Growth of the Charismatic Renewal Ministries, Kachere Document No. 24, Zomba: Kachere, 2006. Clement Chinkambako Abenguni Majawa, *The Holy Spirit and Charismatic Renewal in Africa and Beyond: Pneumatological Considerations*, Nairobi: Creation Enterprises, 2007, p. 14, conducted his research in these parishes between 1998 and 2000 in which he interviewed 224 participants in the Catholic Charismatic movement.

missionary-initiated Pentecostals provided members to Neocharismatic churches or their split-offs became Neocharismatic such as the Apostolic Faith Mission in Malawi (AFM) from which Living Waters Church International founder Apostle Stanley S. Ndovie seceded in 1985.⁴⁷ In order to meet the needs of excommunicated church members and others who were becoming increasingly dissatisfied with the ministry or restrictions in their local churches, some ministries filled that void in their members' lives by meeting on Sunday mornings and thereby becoming a church. A case in point is the Sunday afternoon Pentecostal Revival Crusade fellowship at Livimbo Primary School in Lilongwe which switched to meeting in the morning in 1995 and became the Calvary Family Church branch there.

The apostolic network phase is the fifth stage. The formation of NCCs increased their fervour for evangelism so that just as believers gathered around a gifted leader in the ministry phase, local congregations are planted that cluster around the ministry founder. The founder is understood as a person called by God to lead the organization and functions as a patriarchal/matriarchal figure in this grouping of churches which operate more relationally than bureaucratically. He/she is charismatic in the sociological sense and his position as leader is never contested as there are no elections.⁴⁸ The semblance of a bureaucracy that exists is more functional, mainly for administrative purposes, so that network seems a more apt description for these organizations. The titles of NCC founders have evolved with the phases of their churches. The early leaders of NCCs

⁴⁷ Ulf Strohhahn, *Pentecostalism in Malawi*, pp. 138-146.

⁴⁸ Weber uses the term "charisma" for "a certain quality of an individual personality by virtue of which he is set apart from ordinary men and treated as endowed with supernatural, superhuman, or at least specifically exceptional powers or qualities. These as such are not accessible to the ordinary person, but regarded as of divine origin or as exemplary, and on the basis of them the individual concerned is treated as a leader," Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, New York: The Free Press, 1947, pp. 358-59.

– such as Madalitso Mbewe (Calvary Family Church), Stanley S. Ndovie (Living Waters International Church), Willie Chaponda (Mustard Seed), and Felix Zalimba (All for Jesus) – went by the appellation "evangelist" during the ministry phase, became "pastors" in the congregation phase, and are now called "apostles" in the network phase. Other founders in the network phase are called "bishops" such as Geoffrey Matoga (Faith of God). This change is a reflection of their different functions as their organizations develop. Since apostle is a distinctly Neocharismatic notion on the contemporary Malawian ecclesiastical scene as opposed to bishop, I prefer to call these churches apostolic networks when they function in the mode just described. The past decade has also witnessed the proliferation of the prophet as founder.

The Neocharismatic denomination phase is the last. When a charismatic leader dies, the tendency is for the religious movement to find ways to routinize that charisma by building a bureaucratic leadership that is marked by more complex procedures and decision-making processes so that there is a switch from charismatic leadership to legal-rational leadership in which authority is inherent in an office. There are a few Neocharismatic denominations that operate bureaucratically like the Presbyterian Church of Malawi which has sessions, presbyteries, and a synod.⁴⁹ Whether Neocharismatic churches remain apostolic networks or evolve into denominations replete with a bureaucracy and democratic decision-making processes remains to be seen as many of these nascent movements are still in the shadows of their relatively young founders.

⁴⁹ For a brief discussion of PCM, see Rhodian Munyenembe, "Christianity and Social-Cultural Issues: An Evaluation of the Charismatic Movement's Contribution towards the Contextualization of the Gospel in Malawi," MA, UNIMA, 2006, pp. 66-67.

Types of Neocharismatic Churches

Neocharismatic Churches can be further sub-divided into apostolic and prophetic types. Apostolic Neocharismatic Churches are led by an apostle or a bishop who is usually the founder or foundress. Teaching on various themes deemed of import to their audiences and preaching from the Bible features more than prophetic utterances and exorcisms in their services and generally exhibits the Neocharismatic characteristics discussed above. Prophetic Neocharismatic churches are led by a prophet or prophetess who tends to be less formally educated than in the first type. They are patterned after Prophet-healing/Spiritual AICs and exhibit the same characteristics such as emphasis on spiritual power, use and sale of symbolic objects like blessed water or anointing oil for healing. Their worship services tend to be longer in duration, tend to centre on exorcisms and prophecies while preaching and teaching of Scripture takes a less prominent role. Examples include TB Joshua's Synagogue of All Nations in Nigeria, Prophet Shepherd Bushiri's Enlightened Christian Gathering which was founded in Mzuzu but is now headquartered in Pretoria, Prophet Justice Hara of Christ's Ambassadors who relocated from Lilongwe to Johannesburg, Prophet Wakisa Chizaso of Restoration International Christian Centre in Lilongwe, amongst many others.

The First Neocharismatic Church – Holy Cross Pentecostal Church and Apostle Harry S. Gama

Though attempts have been made to trace the origins of Malawian Neocharismatic churches from some Western source, evidence has not been proffered for such a claim. Munyenymbe attempted to draw a trajectory from the 1960s Charismatic Revival in America to the genesis of Neocharismatic churches in Malawi but evidence of such connections is absent as there are no tangible connections between the Charismatic Revival in America and Holiness Revival influenced para-church organizations operating in Malawi such as

Scripture Union, New Life for All, and Students Christian Organization of Malawi.⁵⁰ Like Klaus Fiedler, he asserts that the first Neocharismatic church was Barbara Tippet's Blantyre Christian Centre, now Word Alive Ministries International.⁵¹ Chakanza speculates that "independent non-denominational evangelical groups were started by Malawians through, probably, the influences of American evangelicals" and records the "Be Born Again" Evangelical Association/*Tchalitchi la Gabriel* on his survey of independent churches in the period 1970-1979; however, he also proffers no evidence of such influences.⁵² Klaus Fiedler, with the exception of the first, records the earliest Neocharismatic churches as follows:

Name	Founded	Founder
Holy Cross Church	June 1979	Apostles S. Gama, G. Phiri, L. Kachingwe
Word Alive/Blantyre Christian Centre	1980	Rev Barbara Tippet
Agape	Feb 1982	Apostle Mgala
Faith of God	1984	Bishop Geoffrey Matoga
Living Waters Church Int.	5 th Jan 1985	Apostle Stanley S. Ndovie
Glad Tidings	Jan 1986	Group initiated
All for Jesus	Jan 1993	Apostle Felix Zalimba
Flames of Victory	Sept 1993	Pastor Kachire
Calvary Family Church	Mar 1994	Apostle Madalitso Mbewe
Vineyard	Nov 1994	Pastor Gama

Most recently, Gadama and Hofmeyr have argued that the beginning of Neocharismatic churches, which they call Charismatic churches, is to be traced to the proliferation of "Pentecostal and Charismatic literature and audio cassettes from America ... which greatly impacted the 'born-again' movement in Blantyre" to favourably influence them towards Pentecostalism so that Rev. Stewart Lane

⁵⁰ Rhodian Munyenembe, "Christianity and Social Cultural Issues," p. 57.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Chakanza, "The Independency Alternative," pp. 38, 42.

could easily establish what they claim is the first charismatic mission in Blantyre called the Cornelius Fellowship.⁵³ This fellowship of mostly white expatriates – actually called "fellowship *ya Azungu*" meaning "white people's fellowship" – from the surrounding districts of Mulanje, Thyolo, and Zomba is described as "elite 'born-again'" who did not prohibit alcoholic beverages or smoking and were viewed by other extreme born-again fellowships, "as a bunch of carnal Christians."⁵⁴ This fellowship may have run from 1979 to 1981.⁵⁵ About the same time, Barbara Tippet's Mustard Seed Fellowship started meeting at the Polytechnic (where Rev Lane was also the college chaplain and ran the Malawi Polytechnic Fellowship) from 1981 until it moved to downtown Blantyre in 1984 where it became a church, Blantyre Christian Centre now called Word Alive Ministries International, in 1986.⁵⁶ But what really was the first Neocharismatic church? Was it started by outside initiatives or by Malawians?

Apostle Harry S. Gama's Conversion

Harry Sam Gama was born in Mangwalala Village, Traditional Authority Changata (formerly Ntondeza) in Thyolo district. His parents hailed from Chole Village, Traditional Authority Mkanda in

⁵³ Richard Gracious Gadama and Johannes Wynand Hofmeyr, "The Early Formation of Charismatic Churches in Malawi and their Significance for the Making of Malawian Society," *Studia Historiae Ecclesiasticae*, Vol. 42, No. 2, pp. 116-135, [120-121].

⁵⁴ Ibid, 121.

⁵⁵ On p. 121 footnote 22, the authors assert that the fellowship ran for two years, 1979-1980 yet they speak of the Cornelius Fellowship "winding up" in 1981 on p. 123.

⁵⁶ The article is not very clear on dates as it refers to Willie Chaponda as going to Blantyre Christian Centre between 1984 and 1985 on p. 125, yet claimed that Tippet "founded the Blantyre Christian Centre in 1986" on footnote 28 on page 123.

Mulanje.⁵⁷ He is married to Juliette with whom he has six daughters and one son. Gama worked for National Statistical Office in Zomba during the 1966 population census and for United Transport Malawi (UTM) in Blantyre from 1967 until about 1977.

In 1974 Gama was involved in a motorcycle accident that left him with a fractured arm. At that point in his life, Gama was not religious and did not attend any church. He says that he was an abuser of alcohol who used to be intoxicated daily. Then he met Laston Kachingwe, who had been born again through Andrew Gabriel's associate called Kilane, who witnessed to him about Jesus.⁵⁸ Kachingwe took Gama to Andrew Gabriel in Monkey Bay, where his Plaster-of-Paris clad hand was instantly healed.⁵⁹ So powerful was his conversion experience that his cravings for alcohol ceased and he asked his wife to rid their house of all empty beer bottles that he had stocked. Gama started attending prayers at Kachingwe's home in Kanjedza Township in Blantyre, house number KJ 258. Kachingwe was a member of St. Columba's CCAP during the tenure of Rev Nkumba though Gama recalls only visiting the church twice as worship and prayer would continue at Kachingwe's house daily. George Oupa Phiri – a Malawi Young Pioneer (MYP) cadre who sang in the Brothers and Sisters Choir and was its chairman – was a colleague of Kachingwe's who had been born again through Gabriel's preaching. Phiri had invited Gabriel to stay at his house in Zingwangwa after seeking permission from Rev Nkumba. Phiri's house was to be the first base of operations for Gabriel in Blantyre from which he itinerated to other houses and venues in his charismatic ministry until

⁵⁷ Int. Sam Harry Gama, apostle, Holy Cross Pentecostal Church, 21.5.2015. The bulk of this section is taken from the interviews I had with him.

⁵⁸ Kachingwe also became a born again Christian in 1974. He was born on 1st January 1944 in Mangoza Village, T/A Thumba, Phalombe, Int William Mandhlopa, Holy Cross Pentecostal Church, Lilongwe, 1.6.2015.

⁵⁹ Int. George Oupa Phiri, apostle, HCPC, Lilongwe, 4.6.2015. Phiri remembers that this was when he was in detention for five months at the Kanjedza Detention Camp in 1974.

Phiri was detained for unexplained reasons by the Banda regime. It was during Phiri's incarceration that the meetings had shifted to Kachingwe's house and Gama had become a born-again.

Ministry with Andrew Gabriel Evangelistic Association

The ministry grew to other locations of Blantyre, especially in the homes of people who had been healed or transformed by it. An early location was the Soche Technical College campus where adherents would gather and spread to other locations such as Nkolokoti, Zingwangwa, and Chilomoni. The main attractions of the ministry were the healings and the transformed lives of many who had been previously addicted to alcohol and smoking.

By 1976, Gama was unable to regularly report for his duties at UTM due to the demands of the ministry, so that he tendered his resignation letter on 30th June 1977.⁶⁰ For Phiri, who was now employed by the Central African Company as an accounts clerk processing tax cards for the Lonrho Group, his last day of work was 1st April 1977, when he felt God calling him to vocational ministry.⁶¹ Gama, together with Phiri and Kachingwe, relocated with their families to Monkey Bay where they joined Andrew Gabriel and were part of *Ophunzira a Gabrieli* (Disciples of Gabriel) from where they ministered with their mentor in the Andrew Gabriel Evangelistic Association.⁶² The years 1978 and 1979 saw the expansion of the ministry with meeting points in Bangwe, Kanjedza, and Chilomoni at the respective community centre halls. The climax of this time,

⁶⁰ Gama had abstained from work for ten days due to the rigours of ministry and spoke to his superior about resigning, but he had protested against the idea saying that traffic reports from Gama's department were still reaching him and therefore saw no reason for the resignation, Int. Harry Sam Gama, apostle, Holy Cross Pentecostal Church, Lilongwe, 21.5.2015.

⁶¹ George Oupa Phiri, apostle, HCPC, Lilongwe, 4.6.2015.

⁶² Ibid.

according to Phiri, was a successful meeting at the Chichiri Secondary School Hall in 1979.⁶³

The revival also had its detractors, those who were negatively affected by the transformations it wrought. Gama asserts that one time he and his acquaintances witnessed to a prostitute in Naperi, Blantyre, whose transformation made them enemies with her patrons so that they were accused of being Jehovah's Witnesses.⁶⁴ He reports that one day in February 1975 the police came to Kachingwe's house in Kanjedza and detained all the worshippers for a day because of an anonymous tip that they were Jehovah's Witnesses.⁶⁵ All the others were released later that day but Kachingwe was detained without trial until May 1975. When this happened, the unemployed Phiri and his family had moved in with the Kachingwes and engaged in the produce business in the townships.⁶⁶

The Genesis of Holy Cross Pentecostal Church

It was on 22nd June 1979 in Area 12 in Lilongwe, while nursing the wounds of a failed Andrew Gabriel Evangelistic Association meeting in Lilongwe caused by one of the mainline churches' collusion with the police, that Kachingwe, Gama, and Phiri together heard the voice of God telling them that he had a great work for them to touch the

⁶³ George Oupa Phiri, apostle, HCPC, Lilongwe, 4.6.2015.

⁶⁴ This was no minor accusation in the days of Dr Kamuzu H. Banda's totalitarian regime that persecuted Jehovah's Witnesses for their non-political stance. For the experience of Jehovah's Witnesses under that totalitarian regime, see Klaus Fiedler, "Power at the Receiving End: Jehovah's Witnesses Experience in One-Party Malawi," in Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *God, People, and Power in Malawi: Democratization in Theological Perspective*, Blantyre: CLAIM-Kachere, 1996, pp. 149-176.

⁶⁵ Arrests of born-again by the Police were frequent in Kamuzu Banda's time, but many were released when they produced their church tithing card (*chitupa*), which proved that they were not Jehovah's Witnesses, George Oupa Phiri, apostle, HCPC, Lilongwe, 4.6.2015.

⁶⁶ George Oupa Phiri, apostle, HCPC, Lilongwe, 4.6.2015.

nations. This was confirmation, for them, of what others had previously told them. After being released by Gabriel to start a new ministry, the three moved to Blantyre with their families and started Holy Cross Church, as it was initially known.⁶⁷

The challenge of not having a steady income led Gama and Kachingwe back into gainful employment in 1979. Gama was offered a job as the central region manager for Ulendo Transport Company which was owned by prominent businessmen Lois Chikhwaza and Tambala, both born-again during the Gabriel years. Kachingwe found a job with Press Holdings Limited in Lilongwe. Phiri first worked for Optichem in Blantyre from 1980 to 1981.⁶⁸ Later, Chikhwaza resigned from ministry in the Holy Cross Church after his return from ministry training at Rhema Bible School in Randburg, South Africa to form Bible Faith Ministries while Geoffrey Matoga, a mathematics lecturer at the University of Malawi's Polytechnic, left to found Faith of God Ministries, both of which negatively affected the number of Holy Cross churches in the southern region, contributing to the name change to Holy Cross Pentecostal Church.⁶⁹ This means that HCPC started in 1979 when the three heard God's confirmation that the ministry should become a church and thus it is the first Neocharismatic church in Malawi. HCPC membership application forms submitted to the Evangelical Association of Malawi, which assert that the church was started in 1974 in Blantyre by the three after praying and fasting, is a collapsing of the ministry phase and the Neocharismatic church phase of HCPC.⁷⁰ In this application dated 15th September 1997, HCPC stated it had 63 churches and 21

⁶⁷ George Oupa Phiri, apostle, HCPC, Lilongwe, 4.6.2015.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Int. William Mandhlopa, bishop, HCPC, Lilongwe, 1.6.2015.

⁷⁰ Evangelical Fellowship of Malawi, Application for Membership, Holy Cross Pentecostal Church, 15.9.2019. The assertion is the reply to the application requirement to briefly state the historical background to which five blank lines are added.

pastors. Though HCPC's certificate of incorporation under the Trustees Incorporation Act (1962) with the Government of Malawi is dated 10th January 1995, this may have been due to the restrictions on church registration that prevailed under the Banda regime regarding religion, which were eased in the multiparty era. If agency is "individual capacity for free thought and action," then the HCPC presents us with a case of African agency in post-colonial Malawi.⁷¹

Conclusion

Professor McCracken shows that one of the factors that led to the emergence of independent churches from the Livingstonia Mission was the missionaries' failure to deal with problems like witchcraft. He notes that "Scots missionaries took refuge in general denunciations of belief in the existence of witchcraft, which were of little consolation to those who were convinced they were caught in its grasp."⁷² As it was in the colonial interwar years around the Livingstonia Mission, so was the case in the post-colonial 1970s in urban Malawi. The dissatisfaction with the Western answers given to their lived experiences with witchcraft and other realities of African life, led Africans to seek an understanding and experience of Christianity that was powerful enough to free them from the clutches of the evils they encountered. Indeed, the initial interdenominational Blantyre Awakening phase of these churches was more concerned with being born-again but in the later phases, especially the ministry phase, there was a heightened deliverance ministry that dealt with issues of ^{witchcraft} and other concerns germane to the African worldview. Thus, Neocharismatic Christianity filled the void felt by Malawian Christians by contextualizing the faith to African realities to offer solutions to Africans by Africans. Though Neocharismatic churches share with Pentecostal churches and the Charismatic Movement within the non-Pentecostal denominations the experience of being

⁷¹ Bruce and Yearly, *The Sage Dictionary of Sociology*, p. 7.

⁷² McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi*, p. 328.

filled with the Spirit, being an African religious movement, being adept contextualizers of the Christian faith to Malawian soil, and thus are often collapsed under the Pentecostal rubric, they are sociologically, ecclesiastically, and historically unique enough to have a classification of their own.

Dividing the Nation or Promoting Unity? Ethnic Based Associations and Production of Heritage in Malawi¹

Mwayi Lusaka

African political leaders, experiencing it as destructive to their ideals of national unity, denounced it passionately. Commentators on the Left, recognizing it as a block to the growth of appropriate class-consciousness, inveigh against it as a case of 'false consciousness.'... Political scientists, intrigued by its continuing power, probe at it endlessly. If one disapproves of the phenomenon, 'it' is 'tribalism;' if one is less judgemental 'it' is 'ethnicity' – Leroy Vail, 1989.

Introduction

Under the presidency of Hastings Kamuzu Banda some Malawians claimed to have experienced 'cultural violence' which refers to the ways in which government suppressed the cultural expressions and political freedoms of its adversaries, particularly those from outside the Chewa cultural group.² Even though Banda encouraged dances that were cast as traditional from various ethnic groups in the country, these were performed to serve and support his regime in what Reuben Chirambo called *Kamuzuism*.³ Banda had his own

¹ This chapter has been adapted from my Doctoral Research which is being supported by Andrew Mellon Foundation at the Centre for the Humanities Research of the University of the Western Cape in South Africa. The supervision for this research is provided by the History Department of the University of the Western Cape.

² Bonaventure Mkandawire, "Ethnicity, Language and Cultural Violence," *The Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 63, No. 1, 2010, pp. 23-42.

³ Reuben Chirambo, "Culture, Hegemony, and Dictatorship in Malawi: Song, Dance, and Politics in Malawi, 1964–1994," PhD, University of Minnesota, 2005, pp. 20-25.

approach where unity and singularity were important principles in his authoritarian state. He was of the idea that all the people should only be identified as Malawians.⁴ This was repeatedly expressed in his speeches where he denounced what he perceived as disunity by arguing that as far as he was concerned ‘there was no Yao, in the country, no Lomwe, no Sena, no Chewa, no Ngoni, no Nyakyusa, no Tonga. There are only Malawians, that is all.’⁵ His cultural philosophy was that of ‘National Culture’ that disregards difference in favour of ‘cultural homogeneity.’ However, like most politicians, there were many contradictions between Banda’s speeches and his policy. Banda had embarked on building Malawi through ‘Chewalisation’ of Malawian identity through the explicit promotion of Chewa traditions, customs and language.⁶ Ideals of ‘one nation,’ ‘one leader’ and ‘one language’ were commonly touted by his party loyalists. The discourse of ‘national culture’ therefore suppressed other cultures while elevating and promoting the Chewa culture as the symbolic culture of the nation. Other scholars have argued that the 1964 cabinet crisis whereby the young ministers from the north and south had openly challenged Banda’s authority had created distrust for any grouping from these regions. This situation made many people to live in constant fear of organizing themselves in an ethnic form as they could have been perceived as a potential threat by the Banda regime.⁷ To a large extent, this had a negative impact on the formation of

⁴ Int. Lovemore Mazibuko, Blantyre, 28.6.2018; Int. Yohane Nyirenda, Blantyre, 5.2.2018; Int. Julio Magomero, Lilongwe, 27.4.2018.

⁵ Leroy Vail and Landeg White, “Tribalism in the Political History of Malawi” in Leroy Vail (ed), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989, p. 146; Int. Lovemore Mazibuko, Blantyre, 28.6.2018

⁶ Deborah Kaspin, “Tribes, Regions and Nationalism in Democratic Malawi,” *Ethnicity and Group Rights*, Vol. 39, 1997, p. 48.

⁷ Int. D.D. Phiri, Blantyre, 8.02.2018; Colin Baker, *The Revolt of the Ministers: The Malawi Cabinet Crisis 1964-1965*, London: I. B. Tauris Publishers, 2001.

cultural heritage associations in Banda's time as they could have been seen as an obstacle to his nationalist agenda.⁸

The end of Banda's regime and the transition to a multi-party form of government meant not only the dawn of political freedoms but also cultural freedoms. The adoption of a democratic constitution which provides for every person's right to freedom of conscience, religion, belief and thought, and also academic freedom was a significant development in the emergence of ethnic associations. These associations claimed to be concerned with preserving and protecting local religious beliefs and cultural practices. The period from 1993 and beyond could be referred to as the turn of cultural heritage associations in Malawi.⁹ Or, following Valdimar Hafstein, it was a period of 'festivalisation, heritagisation and folklorisation.'¹⁰

Malawi has nine major ethnic groups sometimes referred to as official ethnic groups. However, there are more than fifteen indigenous languages spoken in various parts of the country.¹¹ The heritage associations that have been formed, and continue to be formed, draw largely from these ethnic groups. Presently, Malawi has ten recognized heritage associations. It is interesting to note the striking resemblance in the pattern of formation of these current ethnic-based heritage associations with the colonial Native Associations.¹² The present heritage associations appear to be new

⁸ Int. D.D. Phiri, Blantyre, 8.02.2018; Int. Upson Thole, Mzuzu, 26.5.2018.

⁹ Willie Zee, "Democratic Constitution and Ethnic Organisations in Malawi: Preserving Good Culture or Promoting Regionalism, Nepotism or Tribalism," *Historical Research*, Vol. 5(3), 2015, p. 189; Int. Julio Magomero, Lilongwe, 27.4.2018.

¹⁰ Valdimar Hafstein, "Making Festivals," in Valdimar Hafstein, *Making Intangible Heritage: El condor Pasa and Other Stories from UNESCO*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2018, p. 127.

¹¹ Malawi National Commission for UNESCO, Project Document on Promotion, Transmission and Protection of Gule Wamkulu.

¹² For example, North Nyasa Native Association corresponds to Tumbuka Heritage Association, Mombera Native Association corresponds to Mzimba

versions of the old Native Associations. After the Chilembwe Uprising of 1915, 'Native Associations' emerged as political entities for mobilizing members along regional and tribal lines just like the contemporary heritage associations. Although some of them were originally 'tribal' they were in fact national and anti-colonial and pursued a nationalist agenda. Later in 1944 they joined together and formed the Nyasaland African Congress (which became Malawi Congress Party) that led the struggle for the attainment of independence. However, the distinction seems to lie in their espoused objectives. The Native Associations declared themselves to be political mouthpieces of the Africans in presenting their social, political and economic grievances before the colonial authorities. By contrast, the contemporary heritage associations claim to be concerned with culture and not politics. But as the chapter will show they are, in fact, political entities that are more inclined towards the ethnic rather than the affairs of the nation.

The freedoms of democracy had meant two things. First, it had allowed Malawians to assert that they live in a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi-racial country, and not one dominated by any one particular group.¹³ For instance, it has allowed mobilization of groups of people around forms of ethnic associations through the notion of heritage. Thus heritage was bound by ethnicity and came to be associated first of all with the cultural productions of these ethnic-based heritage associations. These heritage associations do not challenge ethnicity but promote it. Thus ethnicity remains the basis of heritage but in multiplicity, as expressed in the catchy phrase of "unity in diversity."

Among the core objectives of these heritage associations are to celebrate, promote and preserve cultural heritage which is

Heritage Association and West Nyasa Native Association to Mdauko wa Atonga Heritage Association.

¹³ Hafstein, "Making Festivals," p. 127.

increasingly vulnerable to forces of globalization in the democratic era.¹⁴ However, as will be explained later, heritage associations in Malawi are not only for revival, preservation and promotion of culture. They are also platforms on which communities claiming to be ethnically based engage and negotiate with the state and developmental organizations to realize their social, economic and political needs. Politicians have also found these heritage associations to be fertile ground to sell their policies and win the support of ethnic groups for electoral gains. The involvement of politics in heritage associations also seems to contribute to some ethnic tensions. Ethnicity is used as heritage. And heritage is used for political mobilization at the local level.

Each heritage foundation or association has a specific day on the calendar in which it holds its own annual cultural festival. It is at these festivals that the heritage spectacle is staged and exhibited through cultural performances, the narration of memory and history of the ethnic community, re-enactments, myth-making, royal processions, traditional food, vernacular architecture and other aspects of cultural heritage claimed as intangible. It is where one becomes a member of the 'tribe' and learns to perform as a 'tribe.' It is where an individual plays a part in which s/he believes and implicitly requests his/her observers to take seriously the impression that is fostered before them. The politicization of the cultural festivals is also common during these events. I argue that the democratic dispensation in Malawi paved the way for the rise of a new mode of heritage production in the form of cultural festivals staged by ethnic-based heritage associations. Furthermore, while this kind of heritage production celebrates ethnic pride and identity, it has increasingly become a site of party politics where notions of tribe and tribalism are reproduced, reinforced and reaffirmed in ways that emphasize difference and not what can be conceptualized as the national. Thus

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 127.

there is a significant ethnicization and sense of difference going on in the cultural festivals inspired by democratic ideals in Malawi.

In this chapter I consider three heritage associations, Mzimba Heritage Association, Mulhako wa Alhomwe Heritage Association and Maseko Ngoni Heritage Association. The discussion of these heritage associations helps us think of heritage, not as an immutable entity but as a discursive practice shaped by specific circumstances through interests, histories, patterns, collisions and politics.

Mzimba Heritage Association and its Activities

The Mzimba Heritage Association is a cultural grouping for the *Jere Ngoni* of Mzimba, in northern Malawi. The *Jere Ngoni* are an offshoot of the Zulu ethnic group of South Africa.¹⁵ The formation of Mzimba Heritage Association can arguably be credited to one man, Upson Wilson Ndawazake Thole. A museum professional, Thole was a curator of Mzuzu Museum, a branch of the Museums of Malawi in the northern region. His interest in forming the association started in 1996 when he attended the coronation of Inkosi Kampingo Sibande. While there he claimed to have had productive conversations with senior chiefs that included Inkosi ya Makosi Mbelwa IV about *Ngoni* culture and tradition. The chiefs asked him how the museum could intervene in reviving the dying *Ngoni* language. He then started programmes of reviving the language at the Museum. Thole brought in two people, Tembo and his son, both of whom had stayed in Bulawayo and could fluently speak *Ndebele*, a sister language to *Ngoni*. The son became the teacher, teaching *Ngoni/Ndebele* language right in the museum. Together with Jere, the messenger at the museum, they

¹⁵ For more about the history of the Ngoni of Malawi see Margaret Read, *The Ngoni of Nyasaland*, London: Oxford University Press, 1956; Bridglal Pachai, *Malawi: The History of the Nation*, London: Longman 1973; Margaret Read, "Tradition and Prestige Among the Ngoni," *Africa*, Vol. 9, 1936, pp. 435-484; Al Mtenje and Boston Soko, "Oral Traditions among the Northern Malawi Ngoni," *Journal of Humanities*, Vol. 12, 1998, pp. 1-18.

formed an association called Abenguni Revival Group.¹⁶ The group's objectives were: to revive the language passed on from their forefathers to younger generations but not being used; to bring unity to the Ngoni from both central and northern regions; and to foster Ngoni identity.¹⁷ The group's activities included the drafting of a constitution, revival of the *Ingoma* dance using old songs. It also ran a club at Mzuzu Museum which practiced old songs and provided entertainment to museum visitors. According to Kayambazinthu, a handout based on Nyembezi's *Learn Zulu* and Cope's *A Zulu Comprehensive Course* formed the basis of the course.¹⁸ The group hoped to have village-based clubs where Zulu lessons would be offered and teachers would be provided by the chiefs. The group's ultimate goal, according to Thole, was to have *Chingoni* included in the school curriculum.

In 2000 other elite professionals and technocrats joined Thole and together they transformed Abenguni Revival Group into Mzimba Heritage Association in order to expand its scope of activities beyond the resuscitation of a dying *Ngoni* language. The specific objectives of Mzimba Heritage Association include promoting *Ngoni* unity, enhancing proper traditional governance, identifying, conserving important *Ngoni* heritage sites and promoting unity and tourism through its flagship cultural festival of *Umtbethebo*. The Association claims that it is first and foremost concerned with rebuilding identity for every person resident in Mzimba. It draws its message of unity from the symbolic meaning of 'Mzimba' after which the district and the association is named. Mzimba means body. Just as the body

¹⁶ Int. Upson Thole, Mzuzu, 26.5.2018.

¹⁷ Pascal Kishindo, "Flogging a Dead Cow? The Revival of Malawian Chingoni," *Nordic Journal of African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 2002, p. 215.

¹⁸ E. Kayambazinthu, "The Language Planning Situation in Malawi," in R. Baldauf and R. Kaplan (eds), *Language and Policy: Botswana, Malawi, Mocambique and South Africa*, Cleverdon: Multilingual Matters Ltd., 2004, p. 126.

symbolizes unity and coordination of its different parts, Mzimba also signifies unity that must exist among the *Ngoni* people in the area. The association is also involved in matters of traditional governance in the district and monitors that proper traditional leadership is in place.¹⁹ It is also at the forefront of identifying sites and places that have historical and cultural significance to the *Jere Ngoni*. For instance, they are currently promoting the site of Hora Mountain, where a museum and royal house have been constructed and there are plans to build guest houses.²⁰ Hora features prominently in the memory of the *Jere Ngoni* of Mzimba for a number of reasons. It is a place where the *Ngoni* waged their last war and triumphed over the *Tumbuka* people who were under chief Baza Dokowe. It became the earliest *Ngoni* settlement where the first Mbelwa was buried; it is where Loudon Mission was founded by Scottish missionary Donald Fraser; the place where the Governor signed a treaty with the *Ngoni* chief that incorporated the *Ngoni* Kingdom into the British protectorate in 1904; and it is also where the *Ngoni* hold their annual festival of *Umtbetho*.

The Mzimba Heritage Association also casts itself as a tool for political empowerment on issues affecting the district. One example is that of the recent land reform programme through which the Malawi parliament passed a bill in 2017 requiring all customary land to be registered under the state. The Association wrote a protest letter to the Office of the President and Cabinet and invoked the 1904 treaty between the British and the *Ngoni* chief in which it was agreed that Mombera Kingdom would be a ‘partner’ with the protectorate. According to the secretary general of the association, there were fifteen points in the agreement one of which indicated that the chief would be the owner of land in its domain. The letter argued that issues of land in Mzimba must be directed by Chief Mbelwa because he has his own administration that governs the territory. From the

¹⁹ Int. Upson Thole, Mzuzu, 26.5.2018.

²⁰ Int. Upson Thole, Mzuzu, 26.5.2018.

point of view of the association, Mzimba is just a partner to the nation of Malawi as the 1904 treaty still stands today.

Reference to the 1904 treaty invokes efforts to reproduce the colonial tribe as "frozen" and one confined to an "ethno-space and territory." The constant reminder by the association of the pre-colonial kingdom of Mombera that once was powerful and independent has the implication of casting Mzimba as a tribal entity that must be governed by traditional dictates as opposed to state statutes. And this has the danger of making people to think in purely tribal rather than national terms.²¹

Umthetho Cultural Festival

Plans for the *Umthetho* Cultural Festival were first conceived in 2004 primarily as a response to the land policy which government had passed. The Mzimba Heritage Association therefore sought to "create an awareness to claim that Mzimba is a kingdom with land rights by staging a festival annually that would bring the Mzimba Ngoni together."²² The first *Umthetho* Cultural festival took place in 2008, although efforts in the previous year failed because of allegations that the Ngoni of Mzimba were planning to secede from the Republic of Malawi at Hora. When such allegations were proved false, government allowed the association to host the event under the theme "from kingdom to protectorate and beyond." This theme might probably have been meant to inform people of Mzimba's pre-colonial kingdom and that any time it can return to the old kingdom.²³

²¹ During the debate of the Land Bill, the Mzimba Parliamentarians used to invoke the 1904 treaty between the British and the Ngoni People. The MPs from Mzimba consistently threatened to break away from the republic and form their own Mombera Republic named after the pre-colonial Ngoni Kingdom of Mombera.

²² Int. Upson Thole, Mzuzu, 26.5.2018.

²³ Ibid.

What actually happens at the *Umtbetho* festival? The festival is a three-day event. It is a festival where one performs to be *Ngoni* and learns how to become *Ngoni*. The event is marked with cultural activities that are deemed to be traditional even though some of them can be seen as ‘invented traditions.’ What is deemed as *Ngoni* tradition is put on exhibition and spectacle for all to see. For example, people clad themselves in outfits that are believed to be traditional to the *Ngoni* such as animal skins. People eat traditional food, perform traditional dances and visit places that are associated with the cultural history of the *Ngoni*. The main objective is to come together as *Ngoni* people and share experiences regarding their *Ngoni* heritage. The *Umtbetho* festival is therefore an experiential medium through which pasts are reconstructed and presented to the public domain in such a way that the audience freely participates in the event as historical and contemporary scenes unfold. In the festival context *Umtbetho* is an occasion in which members of the *Ngoni* community put their culture on display for themselves and others in performance. The *Umtbetho* Festival has become a space where the discourses of difference and belonging are emphasized, contested, negotiated by organizers, participants and state officials. It is a festival where cultural reconstructions are demonstrated through reproduction of ethnicity as evident by the cultural displays and the performances mentioned. What is key at these festivals is the cultural and ethnic demarcation and indeed the production of difference through heritage.

Heritage and Politics at Umtbetho Festival

The *Umtbetho* festival has become a fertile ground for politicking by the state power in Malawi. Thus it is a convenient platform for any ruling party to articulate its plans, visions or issues that concern a particular region or group of people and the nation in general. It is where politicians antagonize their opponents and those whom they perceive to be their critics and adversaries. It is also a platform where issues of identity, tribalism and belonging are intensely debated and interrogated.

At the *Umtbetho* of 2009, held at Edingeni, which coincided with the silver jubilee of *Inkosi ya Makosi* Mbelwa IV, former president Bingu wa Mutharika responded to several issues that were prevalent in the public discourse. He responded to criticism that he did not deserve to have the title of *Ngwazi*. At the previous *Umtbetho* in 2008 held at Hora, Mutharika was accorded the honorific title of *Ngwazi* by the *Ngoni* Chief. According to *Ngoni* tradition, this is a title bestowed upon someone who has displayed prowess and capability in society. Mostly it was bestowed to men because of their valour, brilliance and courage in war. But for the president it was because of his achievements, especially his success in ensuring food security in the country.

At the *Umtbetho* of 2010 the president had also scores to settle with his political nemeses. He once again gave the rationale behind the quota system which was still a hot issue in the country especially among Malawians from the northern region. He directly attacked the clergy in the north for being the main antagonists and instigators against the quota system.²⁴ The festival was also an occasion during which the president reacted to public criticism of his involvement as a patron of a Mulhako wa Alhomwe Heritage Association, the one he had founded. Many Malawians accused the president of tribalism because of his support for the association that belonged to his *Lomwe* ethnic group.

Another issue that the president had to contend with was the behaviour of the clergy at Livingstonia Mission who castigated him and his policies. The clergy also criticized the president for practicing tribalism by excluding the educated northerners from most of the government portfolios. The president advised the Livingstonia missionaries to always present their issues to him using official and proper channels. The President defended himself by claiming that he

²⁴ President Bingu wa Mutharika, *Umtbetho Festival, 2010*, DVD, Malawi Broadcasting Corporation Library, Blantyre.

does not exclude people of the north from national development projects. Like at the previous festival he repeated that he was the only president in the history of Malawi to have prioritized development issues of the northern region.

As the above discussion has shown, the *Umtbethe* cultural festival is not merely a festival in which heritage is re-created but also where party politics take centre stage and those in power use the occasion to articulate their policies. The same situation is replicated at the other heritage associations including the *Mulbako wa Alhomwe* Heritage Association.

Mulbako wa Alhomwe Heritage Association

It is not exactly known when *Mulbako wa Alhomwe* was formed, but records show that the association was launched on 25 October 2008 at *Chonde* in *Mulanje*. Its formation was the idea and initiative of the late President Bingu wa Mutharika. Its launch was combined with the elevation of *Lomwe* Chief, Mkumba, from senior chief to paramount. The *Lomwe* people were the only group in the country who did not have a paramount chief since colonial times. The absence of the paramouncy could be explained by the fact that when the *Lomwe* migrated from Mozambique they settled among the Yao and Mang'anja chiefs where they became subjects. In addition, they migrated as refugees running away from Portuguese oppressive rule and did not come with their own traditional rulers. The colonial authorities had already recognized the Yao and Mang'anja chiefs as authorities at the time of establishing colonial rule and subsequently through indirect rule.²⁵

The formation of *Mulbako wa Alhomwe* can be well understood by considering the prevailing political climate at the time. President

²⁵ See Leroy Vail and Landeg White, "Tribalism in the Political History of Malawi" in Leroy Vail (ed), *The Creation of Tribalism in Southern Africa*, Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1989.

Mutharika had resigned from the United Democratic Front, the party that helped him to power and formed his own party, the Democratic Progressive Party. The president argued that his zero-tolerance on corruption had made him enemies in the party which had been fighting him incessantly. There are important political points to highlight here. First, UDF that he had earlier abandoned had a huge command in the southern region of Malawi where the Yao and Lomwe ethnic groups are found. Upon ditching UDF led by former president Muluzi, a *Yao* by ethnicity, he lost popular support from the Yao dominated districts. Being the second largest group after the *Chewa* in Malawi, Mutharika sought support from the ethnic group to which he belonged. Historically, the *Lomwe* were the last group to migrate to present day Malawi from Mozambique. Many of them first came to Malawi to provide labour for the European-owned estates that were established from the late 19th century. They were subjugated to derogatory and disparaging terms such as *Anguru*, meaning people who speak gibberish. They were mocked as snake eaters and known for practicing witchcraft and sorcery.

All these factors contributed to the decline and loss of pride as an ethnic group and some adopted names of other ethnic groups or assimilated themselves with other cultural groups. To be called *Lomwe* therefore was disgraceful and shameful. Again, because they had adopted languages of other ethnic groups their language underwent decline. Mutharika appeared to have capitalized on this troubled past and looked at the potential electoral demographic statistics when he decided to form the association. The timing of the formation of the association was crucial, as it was in 2008 one year prior to the 2009 general elections.²⁶ The launch of the *Mulhako wa Albomwe* marked the renaissance of a culture that was undergoing decline. Suddenly, in Malawi *Lomwe* became a proud ethnic identity. To be *Lomwe* was to

²⁶ Gift Wasambo and Paul Chiudza Banda, "Materialism and Ethnicity: The Rise of Lomwe Ethnic Consciousness in Malawi," *The Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 66, No. 2, 2013, pp. 39-50.

be associated with the ruling party and its elite. Furthermore, people who had earlier identified or associated themselves with other ethnic groups began to freely identify themselves as *Lomwe*.

The association that was formed became fully involved in activities to reconstruct its heritage. Other institutions of public history and memory began working on various projects of documenting *Lomwe* heritage. For example, the Museums of Malawi found itself in a massive project of collecting ethnographic objects of the *Lomwe* people to boost its collection as it had no artifacts from this ethnic group.²⁷ The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also became fully involved in the nomination process of the *Tchopa* dance, a flagship traditional dance of the *Lomwe*, which was finally inscribed on the Representative List of Intangible Heritage of Humanity.²⁸ Mutharika's political actions in awakening the *Lomwe's* consciousness by reconstructing its heritage is in agreement with Tunbridge and Ashworth who have asserted that each government upon assuming power must appropriate itself control over cultural capital. To achieve this, public heritage interpretation becomes a valuable asset and target for such appropriation.²⁹ Mutharika's actions also enable us to rethink the notion of ethnicity. Thus, apart from understanding it in constructivist perspectives, it is also important to consider it as "essentially a political phenomenon exploited by self-interested groups or classes of people in order to articulate informal (but sometimes formal) organizational functions that are central to the

²⁷ Museums of Malawi, "Report on Research and Documentation Lomwe Culture," 23rd – 31st July, 2012.

²⁸ See the Nomination File No. 00999 for Inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2014.

²⁹ Gregory Ashworth, *Dissonant Heritage*, Chichester: John Wiley and Sons, 1996, p. 8.

struggle of these groups for power (and advantage) within a formal political structure."³⁰

Mulhako wa Alhomwe Cultural Festival

The main purpose of the *Mulhako wa Alhomwe* Festival is to enhance unity and bring a sense of belonging among *Lomwe* people from different districts.³¹ The Festival also aims at preserving and promoting *Lomwe* culture which is rich with traditional dances, food and traditional medicine.³² Like the Umthetho Festival discussed earlier, this festival is also a cultural exhibition, display and performance. The festival is a two-day event. On the first day all *Lomwe* people in Malawi gather at *Chonde* complex. Each area is represented by a dancing group. A dancing competition takes place to select the best performances for the following day. People are brought face to face with what is presented as *Lomwe* tradition. The cultural village at Chonde allows guests and tourists to marvel at the indigenous architecture of *Lomwe* housing units and homestead. With facilities like a granary for storing corn, pigeon, goat house, a traditional stand for drying plates the cultural village captures the traditional life of *Lomwe* people.³³ The *Lomwe* people are also known by their unique craft products. Displayed on this day are bead work, handmade shoes, hats, gourds and basketry just to mention a few. Selling of traditional medicine is another highlight during the Festival. Many

³⁰ Wiseman C. Chirwa, "Democracy, Ethnicity, and Regionalism: The Malawian Experience, 1992-1996," in Kings M. Phiri and Kenneth R. Ross (eds), *Democratisation in Malawi: A Stocktaking*, Zomba: Kachere, 1998, p. 53.

³¹ The Lomwe people are predominantly found in the following districts: Mulanje, Phalombe, Chiradzulo, Thyolo, and some parts of Zomba and Machinga districts. These areas are all in the southern region of Malawi and often described as the 'Lomwe belt.'

³² Department of Arts and Crafts, "Report on 2015 Mulhako wa Alomwe Cultural Festival Held at Chonde in Mulanje on 17 November, 2015," 2015, p. 8.

³³ Museums of Malawi, "Report on 2009 Mulhako wa Alomwe Cultural Festival Held at Chonde in Mulanje on 26 October 2009," 2009.

people buy traditional medicine which is claimed to cure diseases and help to boost sex performance for both males and females. On the second day, which is the pinnacle of the event, the dignitaries arrive, including the State President who is normally the guest of honour. Speeches are made and, at the end, people are entertained to various dances.³⁴ It is not only cultural and heritage issues that take centre stage at the festival. As with other cultural festivals, political issues glaringly come to the surface. This is especially time for speeches and specifically the president is given a chance to speak.

At the 2009 festival President Bingu wa Mutharika responded to the criticism that came from a large section of Malawians, especially opposition parties and other organizations, that it was wrong for the president to support a heritage association of his own ethnic group as that was perceived to constitute tribalism.³⁵ One contributor to a local newspaper expressed his feelings against the president's support of Mulhako wa Alhomwe in a binary framework of tribalism versus nationalism: "I wish I had told our president that as our head of state and the leader of our nation, it is wrong for him to be associating and promoting *Lomwe* culture when he is supposed to operate above tribal lines."³⁶ This is a conundrum for the ethnic heritage associations in Malawi, to harmonize particularism with nationhood. In response to such kind of criticism the president outlined the objectives of the association to prove that it is not concerned with party politics as argued by others. He argued that he had attended the festivals of all the other ethnic groups whenever invited, therefore he was not for tribalism as others portrayed him.

It is important to highlight that some of the criticism against the President's involvement was based on the apparent direct link between his government and *Mulhako wa Albomwe* Heritage

³⁴ President Bingu wa Mutharika, *Mulhako wa Alomwe Festival 2008*, DVD, Malawi Broadcasting Corporation Library, Blantyre.

³⁵ "Of Mulhako, Tribalism and Nationalism," *Daily Times*, 29.10.2009, p. 2.

³⁶ Ibid.

Association. Most of his cabinet ministers were of *Lomwe* descent and held prominent positions in the association. They also actively took leading roles at the event as either master of ceremonies or members of the association. While dressed in the colours of the association, they used government resources such as vehicles. It was as if the cabinet had become the association. It therefore became a problem to separate between the ministers and the members of the association.³⁷ Others observed that the tribal group linked to the president enjoyed greater patronage and disproportionate state support.³⁸ This included the amount of state resources given to the association and also the increased recruitment of its members to senior public positions. As already discussed, this had prompted the President to respond at the *Umtbetho* festival in northern Malawi of his alleged tribalism. One of my interviewees offered this assessment on the formation and works of the association;

I think the formation of Mulhako wa Alhomwe was a Bingu thing, I don't think it was taken from without by the commoners or the chiefs. It was Bingu's idea. In a way he wanted to bring the Lomwe people together, because if you look at the first literature when the Mulhako wa Alhomwe was being formed it said the objective was making sure that Lomwe unite and in that publication, they claimed that the Lomwe are the Majority. Maybe Bingu himself being a Lomwe he wanted to create an enclave. So that in terms of political support he will have the majority support from the majority ethnic group. So in a way maybe he might have a good intention. But it has turned to be something that is political and other ethnic groups don't feel comfortable with it.³⁹

The comment above echoes Bertha Osei-Hwedie's understanding of ethnicity. Thus, ethnicity becomes politically significant when common culture and traditions are cultivated to foster a common political stance among a group. A common culture enables a group

³⁷ Int. Yohane Nyirenda, Blantyre, 12.7.2018.

³⁸ *Tribal Associations*, www.nyasatimes.com/tribal-associations-politics-malawi [15.8.2018].

³⁹ Int. Mathews Kaliwona, Lilongwe, 12.06.2018.

relatively easily to develop common perceptions of politics and political identity, which become the basis of group cohesion, and distinguish it from other groups.⁴⁰

The above discussion points to the fact that the workings of heritage associations like Mulhako are purported to promote difference and the importance of belonging to a particular group with little emphasis on the significance of belonging to the larger constituency of the nation. Thus, what is pervasive at these heritage associations is less about national discourse and more about ethnic discourse presented by ethnic heritage. Thus, at this cultural festival the *Lomwe* people assert identity and belonging through representation of dances and drama which are deemed ethnic.

Maseko Ngoni Heritage Association and Umhlangano

Like the Ngoni of Mzimba in the north, the *Maseko Ngoni* in the central and southern regions of Malawi migrated from South Africa.⁴¹ The activities of *Maseko Ngoni* Heritage Association revolve around the tomb and memory of their first King in Malawi, Inkosi Philip Gomani I. According to Chifundo Gumbula, the history keeper of Maseko Ngoni Heritage Association, the association was formed in 1993 by local chiefs. However, it became more organized in 2001 under *Inkosi ya Makbosi* Gomani who encouraged and mobilized the *Ngoni* to come together after seeing the global trends that are affecting their culture. *Inkosi* Gomani took initiatives to teach and bring awareness of Ngoni traditions to towns, schools and other areas

⁴⁰ Bertha Osei-Hwedie, "The Role of Ethnicity in Multi-Party Politics in Malawi and Zambia," *Journal of Contemporary African Studies*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 1998, p. 229.

⁴¹ The Ngoni Maseko are found in central region covering such districts as Lilongwe, Dedza and Ntcheu which is their headquarters. In the Southern region they are found in Neno, Blantyre and Thyolo where there is Inkosi Bvumbwe.

beyond the villages.⁴² The Maseko Ngoni suffered the same fate as their counterparts in the north on the loss of their language and the reasons for this loss are the same.⁴³

The association has therefore made efforts to revive the language by opening schools with volunteer teachers who help to teach. They go around the schools in town teaching the children about Ngoni traditions, food, dressing, dances, history, wedding ceremonies in the cattle kraal and how Ngoni Chiefs function. They have also introduced a book entitled *Ku Ngoni* about the Ngoni language. The association is also fully involved in promoting and reviving other traditions, for example funeral rituals and practices. The *Ngoni* are buried while sitting upright and believe that they never die but just rest. According to Gumbula they believe that when war breaks out in the afterlife, he or she will be able to stand and fight.⁴⁴ Paramount *Inkosi* Mswati Kanjedza Gomani is the current patron of the association. The association also organizes annual cultural festivals called *Umblanghano*. *Umblanghano* is a *Ngoni* (isiZulu) term which means the great gathering. In this case *Umblanghano wa Maseko* means the great gathering of the Maseko Ngoni. The *Umblanghano* festival aims at enhancing unity and bringing a sense of belonging among the Maseko Ngoni from all the districts in which they live. The festival also aims at preserving and promoting the Maseko Ngoni culture which is rich with traditional dances. The festival opens a podium for interaction between the *Maseko Ngoni* and other stakeholders, for example, government and NGOs. This interaction is important as it opens discussions that result in different development activities like construction of schools, health centres and promotion of good farming methods.⁴⁵ However, as will be shown later, the festival has been hijacked as the platform for government to engage with

⁴² Int. Chifundo Gumbula, Lilongwe, 26.4.2018,

⁴³ See Kishindo, "Flogging a Dead Cow?" pp. 206-223.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Int. Chifundo Gumbula, Lilongwe, 26.4.2018.

politicians, particularly those from the opposition. It is another platform for party politics, thereby interrogating the quest for unity and nationhood in Malawi.

The *Umblangano* cultural festival is a three-day event. On the morning of the first day they observe the ritual of *Mkhwisulu*. *Mkhwisulo* means sacrificial offering to appease the spirits of the departed. On the second day there is *Kumekere*, where they drink and eat. The third day is the zenith of the festival where in the afternoon the Inkosi in his royal glory appears to the public accompanied by his indunas (subordinate chiefs).⁴⁶ Politics is also visible at this festival. Consider, for instance, the *Umblangano* Cultural Festival of 2014 where before President Peter Mutharika began to speak, he had to discipline his party members who were singing political songs by reminding them that ‘this is not a political rally, don’t put me in jeopardy’.⁴⁷ Yet what he spoke was not any different from a political rally. Apart from emphasizing the importance of unity amongst Malawians and encouraging them to preserve and promote their traditions through heritage associations, the president took the opportunity to brag about what his government had achieved. He also locked horns with the opposition parties. The president thanked the people of Ntcheu for voting for candidates of his party in all the six constituencies for parliamentary seats. He urged them to vote for his party’s candidates in the next general elections. Speaking at the same function, the Vice president Saulos Chilima, a Ngoni from Ntcheu, completely dressed in Ngoni traditional outfit, declared that during the general elections of 2019 Ntcheu was going to vote for the Democratic Progressive Party candidates at all levels of presidency, legislature and local government. The president attacked the opposition party, especially the Malawi Congress Party of Dr Kamuzu Banda for not doing enough development in Ntcheu and in Malawi during its rule. He

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ President Arthur Peter Mutharika, *Umhlango Festival 2014*, DVD, MBC Library, Blantyre.

went on to strongly criticize the journalists and the opposition leadership for not appreciating government efforts towards the development of the country.

Again, the festival which is meant to celebrate heritage of the Ngoni Maseko was turned into a political rally where political leaders took advantage to advance their agendas and even engaged their perceived political opponents. While these heritage associations must be commended for the reconstruction of heritage and the preservation and promotion of traditions, it is the element of increased politicization by politicians and the petty bourgeoisie and their link to patronage, that create some tension in the nation and degrade their credibility. This in a way betrays the core objectives which they claim are fundamental to their work. Furthermore, these heritage associations seem to entrench and espouse ethno-centrism that challenges and threatens the essence of nationhood in Malawi. The line between party politics and heritage work for some heritage associations have become so blurred that it is seductive to see some heritage associations as quasi-political parties. Cases of some heritage associations being embroiled in violent activities that are politically motivated are becoming more and more common in Malawi.

Take for instance the 2015 Gonapamuhanya Cultural Festival of the Tumbuka people in northern Malawi where the guest chief from Zambia died and many others sustained injuries after a fracas between members of the opposition Malawi Congress Party and the ruling Democratic Progressive Party.⁴⁸ Such incidents of politicization of heritage associations and their festivals raise important questions. Are heritage associations a source of fragmentation or of national unity? Do heritage associations contribute to ethnic tensions? Is there a distinction between party politics and heritage associations in Malawi? Responses to these questions were varied in

⁴⁸ *Gonapamuhanya Festival*, www.nyasatimes.com/zambian-chief-dies-amid-dpp-terror-gonapamuhanya, [21.8.2018].

my fieldwork. Some were of the view that cultural heritage associations are not versions of party politics. They argued that cultural heritage associations are not platforms for party politics. What politicians do is to abuse these groupings. But they were initially set up purely for the promotion of their heritage.⁴⁹ Others were of the view that when politics come in, they contribute to ethnic tensions.⁵⁰ In comparison with the sense of unity under the authoritarian regime of Dr Banda, some feel that Malawi is becoming more fragmented as a result of the emergence of these heritage associations in democracy.

This conundrum that democracy has presented with respect to heritage associations is succinctly summed up by Chijere Chirwa when he argues that;

Ethnicity and regionalism are more likely to surface in their glaring form under a democratic political dispensation than under an autocratic one. This is because in a democracy, any group of people are free to assert their identity and to lobby for their interests or the interests of the areas from which they come. By creating an enabling environment for particularistic interests of this nature, democracy does give rise to enormous challenges to its own survival as a nationally unifying ideology.⁵¹

During the time of Dr Banda the idea of ‘national culture’ dominated although some efforts were made to suppress other cultural groups to create what was perceived as ‘Malawi national identity’ in the spirit of nation building. And during the era of democracy, what is dominant is the discourse of cultural heritage which flourishes on promoting cultural differences. Thus, the dilemma is how to strike a balance between aspirations for local/ethnic identity and the ideals of nationhood in ways that do not shake the very foundations of the nation through heritage associations and their festivals?

⁴⁹ Int December, Chimseu, Jana, Bwanausi, Blantyre, 3.12.2018.

⁵⁰ Int Clement Mzumara, Christopher Chitsime, Edward Mlongoti and Haswell Kumtumanji, Blantyre, 1.15.2018.

⁵¹ Chirwa, “Democracy, Ethnicity and Regionalism,” p. 55.

I suggest that a healthy way forward can be found when the heritage associations are devoid of politicization by both politicians and the petty bourgeoisie behind the formation of these heritage associations. As this chapter has shown, the ways in which heritage associations are formed in Malawi render themselves palatable and susceptible to politicization which in turn leads to ethnic tensions that threaten the unity of the nation. Instead of being formed from bottom-up, they are formed from top-down. It is the petty bourgeoisie who are mostly at the helm in the formation of these heritage associations. They have their own agendas, mostly political in nature, that become hidden in cultural and heritage objectives. These objectives are then imposed on the community concerned to sound as if they are emanating from the subject communities. It is rare to find an association that is initiated by the ordinary people. The heritage created is also made to appear as if it is an idea from the ordinary community, but it is subtly produced by the petty bourgeoisie to serve their interests. Because the petty bourgeoisie know each other's political objectives behind the formation of heritage associations they are ready and able to contend each other in fierce terms that render the associations full of ethnic and political tensions. As Gregory Kamwendo reminds us, these associations are dominated by people of influence in society such as businessmen, academicians, clergy, politicians, as such political importance may be extended beyond their cultural objectives.⁵²

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the new mode of heritage production that finds its expression in the post-1994 democratic era that followed the end of Banda's autocratic rule. This heritage production is manifested by ethnic based heritage associations and their activities. The way this

⁵² Gregory Kamwendo, "Ethnic Revival and Cultural Associations in the New Malawi: The Case of Chitumbuka," in Harri Englund (ed), *A Democracy of Chameleons*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 2001, p. 140.

heritage is produced appears to have been championed by communities from below. However, I have shown that it is a community-based heritage that is subtly produced and driven by the petty bourgeoisie. I have argued that while this kind of heritage production celebrates ethnic pride and identity, it has increasingly become a site of party politics and campaigning where the notions of tribe and tribalism are reproduced, sometimes reinforced and reaffirmed with the potential spectre of disunity in the country. Furthermore, the importance of belonging to the larger constituency of the nation seems to be largely overshadowed at these ethnically based heritage festivals.

John McCracken's Contribution to Malawi's Urban History

Ruth Mandala

Introduction

Recent years have seen the growth of scholarship on Africa's urban history owing to trends in social and cultural history as well as the increased urbanization in Africa.¹ This trend is reflected in the publication of many history books and articles on urban Africa including: *The Urban Experience in Eastern Africa*, *Africa's Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, *The African City: A History* and *The History of African Cities South of the Sahara*.² These studies interrogate, among other concerns, how Africans historically shaped the pattern of urbanization and how urbanization influenced African social and cultural practices.³

Despite this upsurge, however, studies on Malawi's urban history are rare. As McCracken noted in 1998, "the remarkable outpouring of work on Southern African urban history over the last twenty years has largely bypassed Malawi."⁴ Twenty years later, the situation has barely changed.

¹ Andrew Ivaska, "Book review. The Urban Experience in East Africa 1750-2000, A. Burton (ed)," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 1, 2005, p. 173.

² Andrew Burton, *The Urban Experience in Eastern Africa 1750-2000*, Nairobi: British Institute in Eastern Africa, 2002; Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, *The History of African Cities South of the Sahara: From the Origins to Colonisation*, Markus Wiener Publishers, 2005

³ Laurent Fourchard, "African Urban History: Past and Present Perspective," *Lagos Historical Review*, Vol. 5, 2005, pp. 1-21.

⁴ John McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed: Class, Conflict, and Nationalism in Urban Malawi," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 39, No. 2, 1998, p. 247.

Nonetheless, McCracken has made a tremendous contribution towards Malawi's urban history in line with studies on African urban history in general, an argument that this chapter advances. This argument is based on two of McCracken's works: "Blantyre Transformed: Class, Conflict, and Nationalism in Urban Malawi," a 1998 article published in the *Journal of African History* and the chapter on "The Urban Experience" in his book, *A History of Malawi 1859-1966*.⁵ Further, the chapter argues that this contribution offers a foundation on which scholars of Malawi's urban history could base their studies. The argument is supported by the existence of multiple urban themes in Africa's urban historiography that McCracken engages with in his work.

The chapter proceeds as follows: first, it defines the field of urban history, and then provides a brief overview of Africa's and Malawi's urban history in that order. Next, the chapter examines McCracken's work to reveal his contribution to Malawi's urban history within the context of Africa's urban historiography. The final section discusses the conclusion, which includes areas for further research.

The Field of Urban History

Urban history is a field of research that interrogates how people shape the pattern of urbanization and how urbanization influences social and cultural practices.⁶ The development of urban history as a sub-discipline dates back to the 1960s when James H. Dyos, British historian, spearheaded the study of cities through his publications and initiative in the establishment of an Urban History Group at the University of Leicester.⁷ Dyos is believed to have changed the

⁵ John McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed;" John McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859-1966*, Oxford: James Currey, 2012.

⁶ Laurent Fourchard, "African Urban History," p. 1.

⁷ Francis Sheppard, "Professor H.J. Dyos," *The London Journal*, Vol. 4, No. 2, 1978, pp. 155-157.

academic approach to the city, considering it as an object of study.⁸ This change was followed by further developments in the 1970s and 1980s when urban history expanded, especially in US universities owing to the surge of interest in social history.⁹ These developments had a considerable impact on African history as a few studies on urban Africa were published in these years.¹⁰ However, Coquery-Vidrovitch argues that the recent interest in urban history can be traced back to 1996 when the School of Oriental and African Studies held an international conference that gave birth to the first collective book on African urban history published in 2000.¹¹

Despite the increased interest in urbanity amongst Africanist historians, the scholarship on Malawi is very thin. For example, a survey of edited collections covering African urban history has no Malawian case studies. Salm and Falola's *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective* has three case studies on Kenya, three on South Africa, one on Zimbabwe, Senegal and Namibia, and two on Nigeria but none on Malawi.¹² Similarly, in Anderson and Rathbone's *Africa's Urban Past*, there are case studies on Tanzania, Ghana, Congo, South Africa, Ethiopia, Uganda, and Nigeria but none on Malawi.¹³ This attests to the substantial absence of Malawi's urban history scholarship, as McCracken noted.

⁸ Laurent Fourchard, "African Urban History," p. 2.

⁹ R.A. Mohl, "The History of the American City," in W.H. Cartwright and R.L. Watson (eds), *Reinterpretation of American History and Culture*, Washington: National Council for the Social Studies, 1973, pp. 165-205.

¹⁰ David Anderson and Richard Rathbone, *Africa's Urban Past*, Oxford: James Currey, 2000, p. 11.

¹¹ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "African Urban Spaces: History and Culture" in Steven Salm and Toyin Falola (eds), *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2005; Anderson and Rathbone, (eds) *Africa's Urban Past*, Oxford: James Currey, 2000.

¹² Steven J. Salm and Toyin Falola (eds), *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, New York: University of Rochester Press, 2005.

¹³ Anderson and Rathbone, *Africa's Urban Past*.

Similarly, in recent years, history books on particular African cities have been published. These include Brennan, Lawi and Burton's *Dar-es-Salaam: Histories from an Emerging African Metropolis*; Yoshikuni's *African Urban Experiences in Colonial Zimbabwe: A Social History of Harare before 1925*; Mutongi's *Matatu: A History of Popular Transportation in Nairobi* and Bickford's *The Emergence of a South African Metropolis: Cities and Identities in the Twentieth Century*, focusing on Johannesburg, Cape Town, and Durban.¹⁴ However, books focusing on Malawian cities are largely missing.

McCracken explains this absence with reference to Malawi's colonial economy, which he argues was mostly rural but also attributes it to the weak impact of settler colonialism.¹⁵ Garth Myers also notes this absence. Although his 2003 book includes a case study of Lilongwe, he argues that Malawi's cities continue to be understudied. He substantiates this claim by revealing that a search on articles on Malawi on the internet information service of Article-First generated 932 scholarly essays or papers from 1996 to 1999. And only nine of these had urban issues as their core concern.¹⁶

Nonetheless, the rarity of published books and articles need not blind us to the contributions that exist on urban history, mostly in the form of dissertations, theses, and seminar papers. Notably, there is Phiri's "The Making and Unmaking of a Colonial Capital: A Historical Profile of Urban Zomba to 1964," Power's "Individual

¹⁴ James R. Brennan, Yusuf Lawi and Andrew Burton, *Dar es Salaam: Histories from an Emerging African Metropolis*, Nairobi: Mkuki na Nyota Publishers, 2007; Tsuneo Oshikuni, *African Urban Experiences in Colonial Zimbabwe: A Social History of Harare before 1925*, Harare: Weaver Press, 2007; Vivian Bickford-Smith, *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis: Cities and Identities in the Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016; Kenda Mutongi, *Matatu: A History of Popular Transportation in Nairobi*, Chicago University Press, 2017.

¹⁵ John McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed," p. 247.

¹⁶ Garth Andrew Myers, *Verandahs of Power: Colonialism and Space in Urban Africa*, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2003.

Enterprise and Enterprising Individuals: African Entrepreneurship in Blantyre and Limbe, 1907-1953," Mjojo's "Urban Development: The Case of Lilongwe 1920-1964" and Pennant's "Towards a History of Urban Housing in Malawi."¹⁷ However, all these works were written in the 1980s and early 1990s. Since then works on Malawi's urban history have continued to be rare.

It is against this background that this chapter argues that John McCracken made a tremendous contribution to opening up discussion on Malawi's urban history, particularly colonial urban history. This argument is based on the multiplicity of urban themes that McCracken discusses, which also reflect broader developments in the historiography of urban Africa.

McCracken's Contribution to Malawi's Urban History

Multiple themes feature in Africa's urban historiography. These include urbanity in pre-colonial Africa; the emergence of cities in colonial Africa; urban planning in colonial Africa; race relations and urban segregation; urban culture; urban control and order; and consciousness and resistance in urban Africa. McCracken's work touches on some of these themes with different degrees of depth.

To begin with, McCracken advances the argument that Malawi had urban centres before British colonization.¹⁸ By this, McCracken

¹⁷ Kings M. Phiri, "The Making and Unmaking of a Colonial Capital: A Historical Profile, of Urban Zomba to 1964," University of Malawi, Chancellor College, History Seminar Paper No. 3, 1987/1988; Joey Power, "Individual Enterprise and Enterprising Individuals: African Entrepreneurship in Blantyre and Limbe, 1907-1953," PhD, Dalhousie University, 1990; B.K.M. Mjojo, "Urban Development: The Case of Lilongwe 1920-1964," University of Malawi, Chancellor College, History Seminar Paper No. 12, 1988/1989; T. Pennant, "Towards a History of Urban Housing in Malawi," University of Malawi, Chancellor College, History Department, Seminar Paper, No. 5, 1983.

¹⁸ John McCracken, *History of Malawi 1859-1966*, pp. 282-283.

affirms the scholarship which argues that pre-colonial African societies also had towns and cities.¹⁹ In that regard, McCracken discusses Makanjira and Nkhotakota as pre-colonial urban centres, which developed as products of slave and ivory trades.²⁰ This argument runs in tandem with studies that show the critical role that trade played in the development of towns in pre-colonial Africa.²¹ McCracken then offers a history of these centres and highlights that, to a certain extent, the towns lost their significance with the end of the slave trade. For instance, he shows that Makanjira, a pre-colonial town, was destroyed by the British during the anti-slave trade campaign.²² However, he argues that Nkhotakota, another pre-colonial town kept its dynamism during the colonial period as it also took on aspects of a colonial town. Therefore, while Nkhotakota suffered from the end of the slave and ivory trade, it benefitted from the establishment of an administrative *boma* in 1894.²³ Thus, McCracken argues that colonialism did not introduce urbanity to Africa as towns also existed in pre-colonial times. However, while some of these towns became casualties of colonialism, others evolved in the process.

Second, McCracken's work discusses the development of colonial towns in Malawi. In that regard, he is in conversation with the historical urban studies elsewhere that focus on the development of colonial towns and the factors that contributed to their emergence. One such work by Bickford-Smith reveals that in South Africa, substantial urbanization was a result of the mineral revolution; particularly the discovery of diamonds at Kimberly in 1870 and gold

¹⁹ Vivian Bickford-Smith, *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis*; Andrew Burton, *The Urban Experience in Eastern Africa*; Coquery-Vidrovitch, *History of African Cities*.

²⁰ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 283.

²¹ Anderson and Rathbone, *Africa's Urban Past*, p. 1.

²² McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 282.

²³ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 283.

on the Witwatersrand in 1886.²⁴ Similarly, Freund argues that towns in the Central African Copper belt, in the colonies of Northern Rhodesia and Belgian Congo developed as sites of mining capitalist production.²⁵ In as much as towns in Malawi did not emerge as a result of mining activities, McCracken, in his work, traces the factors that facilitated the development of colonial towns in Malawi.

First, he reveals that Nyasaland's urban development was split between three settlements: Blantyre, Zomba, and Limbe, all of which were impoverished.²⁶ In that respect, he compares Nyasaland's urban development to that of other colonies such as Tanganyika, which had a single dominant commercial and administrative centre. For Nyasaland, such a fragmentation had a bearing on urbanization as development was not concentrated in one area.²⁷

For Blantyre, McCracken argues that the Scottish missionaries and the African Lakes Company founded the town in the 1870s.²⁸ Thus, Blantyre was founded on Christianity and commerce. He shows that Europeans chose Blantyre because it was on the route from Quelimane to Lake Malawi, supporting the claim that Blantyre was by design a commercial centre. Accordingly, amongst the first buildings to be constructed in Blantyre were the Mandala House and compound and the African Lakes Company headquarters, all built by the African Lakes Company.²⁹

As regards the development of Limbe Township, McCracken argues that its history began when the Shire Highlands Railways Company opened its headquarters there. Following this development, the Imperial Tobacco Company opened its factory in

²⁴ Bickford-Smith, *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis*, p. 16

²⁵ Freund, *The African City*, p. 65.

²⁶ McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed," p. 247

²⁷ McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed,"

²⁸ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 284; Stephen Green, "Blantyre Mission," *The Nyasaland Journal*, Vol. 10, No. 2, 1957, pp. 6-17.

²⁹ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 286.

1908. Consequently, Indian traders flocked to the township, and further tobacco factories were built, which reinforced Limbe's position as the tobacco marketing centre of Malawi.³⁰ Therefore, although Blantyre and Limbe developed as separate towns, they were both based on commerce.

However, McCracken shows that the development of Zomba differed from the other two towns as administrative factors were more important. In 1895, Zomba had five houses, one of which was a post office. However, in a few years, it expanded to include a military cantonment, a new government house, a Gymkhana Club, and a central prison.³¹

Beyond accounting for the emergence of these towns, McCracken also offers insights into their development in the colonial period. He shows that although electricity was introduced to Blantyre in 1926, Blantyre and Limbe did not develop significantly until after the Second World War. Primarily, this was due to the nature of Nyasaland's economy, which was rural and thus failed to attract many settlers. The limited number of settlers, in turn, had a bearing on the number of full ratepayers who could finance the development of the towns. That, coupled with the fact that the government was not ready to invest in urban development, meant that the towns in Nyasaland could attain only limited urban development.³²

This observation is also in line with the historiography of urban Africa which shows that before the Second World War generally there was neglect of the urban development of most parts of Africa, which prevented rapid urbanization in many colonies. However, this changed because of shifts in British colonial urban policy. With the Native Development and Welfare Act passed in 1940, extended in 1945, the British acknowledged the value of stabilizing African

³⁰ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 286.

³¹ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 284.

³² McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed," p. 251.

labour. Thus they changed their attitude from seeing Africans as tribesmen who needed to be protected from detribalization to viewing them as citizens and permanent residents of the urban space.³³ Thus, as Freund observes, urban growth extended itself by leaps and bounds in the final generation of colonial rule beginning with the end of the Second World War.³⁴ The change in urban policy for Nyasaland saw government release funds, which enabled infrastructural development in Blantyre and Limbe. In that regard, McCracken reveals that in the years after the Second World War the government embarked on several urban development projects. For example, it surfaced the dusty and pot-holed roads; built a thousand government houses at Naperi and Soche for government employees; constructed the 400-bed Queen Elizabeth Hospital alongside the High Court buildings at Chichiri as well as the Rangeley Stadium, later known as Kamuzu Stadium.³⁵

Apart from changes in government policy, McCracken also argues that an increase in the prices of commercial crops also facilitated the development of Blantyre and Limbe. He maintains that the increase in prices allowed new tobacco processing factories to be opened in Limbe and Chichiri. In consequence, European owned transport and commercial companies expanded, and many Asian traders migrated to the town. He also argues that it is in this period that factories producing soap, cement, and other goods were opened in Blantyre, marking the first venture into the manufacturing sector.³⁶

³³ Andrew Burton, "Townsmen in the Making: Social Engineering and Citizenship in Dar es Salaam, 1945-1960," *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, Vol. 36, No. 2, 2003, p. 334; Frederick Cooper, *Africa Since 1940, The Past of the Present*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002; Frederick Cooper, *On African Waterfront: Urban Disorder and the Transformation of Work in Colonial Mombasa*, London: Yale University Press, 1987, p. 11.

³⁴ Bill Freund, *The African City: A History*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007, p. 65.

³⁵ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 292.

³⁶ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 292.

The expanding economy in Blantyre created new jobs, and many Africans flocked to the town. While the population of Blantyre was less than 4,500 in 1945, and that of Limbe was 7,000, in 1956, Blantyre-Limbe had 55,000 inhabitants while in 1966 it had reached 110,000. McCracken does not discuss the racial distribution in all these years but he states that in 1945, Blantyre had 400 Asians and about 280 Europeans. Limbe, on the other hand, had 600 Asians and about 280 Europeans.³⁷

McCracken shows that Blantyre and Limbe experienced a population explosion after the two towns were amalgamated in 1956. However, the urban population in Nyasaland generally remained low. When Malawi attained independence in 1964, over 95% of Malawi's population lived in the countryside, and the economy was almost entirely rural.³⁸

The third theme in urban historiography that McCracken discusses concerns race relations and segregation in Nyasaland. This theme has received considerable attention from scholars of colonial urban Africa. Scholarship has focused on the origins of segregation with its characteristics of separate locations for the races and control over black mobility. For example, Paul Maylam shows that in South Africa, segregated locations were created for blacks and whites. African locations were created outside urban areas or on the fringes. By contrast, white locations were found in cities. In explaining the existence of segregation, Freund argues that the policy of segregation was not only linked to the racial theories of superiority but it also connected to anxieties about epidemics and the need to keep the new ruling class of the colony healthy through isolation from contact with the bulk of natives.³⁹ However, most studies attribute segregation to the sanitation syndrome, through which scholars explain urban

³⁷ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 286.

³⁸ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 282.

³⁹ Bill Freund, *The African City, A History*.

segregation in terms of moral panic and racial hysteria as whites associated the black urban presence with filthiness, disease, and crime.⁴⁰

It is no surprise then that McCracken's work considers the different ways in which Africans experienced segregation in colonial towns in Nyasaland, particularly in Blantyre and Zomba. Firstly, McCracken reveals that in Blantyre, town councils enforced segregation through the housing policy. The policy banned Africans from providing housing for themselves through two stipulations. First, that no wattle and daub houses were allowed within the Blantyre township. But, if Africans were to provide their housing, the buildings were to be of brick, wood, or iron. Second, that such houses were to be of no less value than 50 pounds.⁴¹ These conditions deliberately made it impossible for Africans to provide housing for themselves as they could not afford houses of that value. McCracken further argues that although the Blantyre Town Council planned housing for Africans in the 1920s, owing to a lack of funds it was only in 1936 that thirty houses were constructed at Naperi. Therefore, most Africans who worked in town lived in the villages close to town, notably Chichiri, located mid-way between Blantyre and Limbe, and in Ndirande.⁴²

Furthermore, McCracken shows that in the 1950s, the government took over responsibility from the Town Councils to provide African housing to overcome acute shortages.⁴³ However, this project was also racially segregative as the new plan involved the division of

⁴⁰ Paul Maylam, "Explaining the Apartheid City: 20 Years of South African Urban Historiography," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 21, No. 1, (1995), p. 24; Ambe Njoh, "Colonial Philosophies, Urban Space and Racial Segregation in British and French Colonial Africa," *Journal of Black Studies*, Vol. 38, No. 4, 2008.

⁴¹ McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed," p. 250.

⁴² McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed," p. 251.

⁴³ McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed," p. 262.

the town into high, medium, and low-density areas.⁴⁴ Such division was a typical example of a policy that was characteristic of urban Africa, which was grounded on separating the races as evident in Kenya, Tanganyika, and Northern Rhodesia among other colonies.⁴⁵ McCracken contends that the decision to divide Blantyre along those lines provoked a generally negative response as Africans claimed that they were not consulted.⁴⁶ Although McCracken does not discuss the contestations further, Power reveals that the leadership of the Nyasaland African Congress, and native authority Kapeni condemned these delineations as being segregative.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, her work focuses on African businesses in colonial Blantyre and only discusses the changes in the urban space within the context of how it affected African businesses. Therefore, it would be interesting to explore the role of Africans in the urbanization of Nyasaland and the possible contestations that emanated from the conflicting interests among the different groups of people in the town. Maylam shows that for South Africa, compounds and hostels were the first rigid form of residential segregation applied in the development of the African city.⁴⁸ Therefore, it would be interesting to examine the African compounds that were built in Blantyre in the later colonial period, such as the Mpingwe African Compound in Limbe.

McCracken also cites examples of segregation as experienced in Zomba, the colonial capital. Notably, he highlights the separation of the races, as seen in the way Zomba town was planned. He argues that a golf course acted as a *cordon sanitaire* between the European

⁴⁴ John McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 292.

⁴⁵ Catherine Coquery-Vidrovitch, "Racial and Social Zoning in African Cities from Colonisation to Post-independence," in Els Borgats and Remco Raben (eds), *Beyond Empire and Nation: The Decolonisation of African and Asian Societies, 1930s-1970s*, Leiden: Brill, 2012; Njoh, "Colonial Philosophies, Urban Space and Racial Segregation in British and French Colonial Africa," p. 582.

⁴⁶ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 292.

⁴⁷ Power, "Individual Enterprise and Enterprising Individuals," p. 314.

⁴⁸ Maylam, "Explaining the Apartheid City," p. 23.

residential area, and the Native Township as well as the commercial area on the plain.⁴⁹ In the same way, the urban amenities in Zomba were not for all the races to enjoy. For example, there was a whites-only club, whites-only hospital, and whites-only cottages. McCracken reveals that it was only in 1961 that the club admitted its first African member. Such racial separation also applied to social events such as sundowners, dinner parties, and balls, which Europeans often organized but hardly ever invited Africans.⁵⁰

Secondly, McCracken argues that segregation manifested itself through a curfew imposed on Africans. Africans were forbidden to remain in the township between 9 pm and 5 am without a pass provided by their employers.⁵¹ This experience was also not peculiar to Nyasaland as other African colonies notably South Africa, Southern Rhodesia, Northern Rhodesia and Kenya experienced the same.⁵² In Kinshasa, Congo, for example, there also was a strictly enforced curfew which ran from dusk to dawn to curtail Africans' mobility within the township.⁵³

Similarly, there are records of pass laws and curfews for both men and women in colonial Zimbabwe.⁵⁴ McCracken reveals that on at least four occasions, the Blantyre and Limbe Town Councils rejected government requests to abandon the curfew imposed on Africans. The council only gave away reluctantly in March 1954 after the police argued that the amendment would not make any considerable

⁴⁹ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 284.

⁵⁰ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 285.

⁵¹ McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed," p. 250.

⁵² Rodney Davenport, "African Townsmen? South African Natives (Urban Areas) Legislation through the Years," *African Affairs*, Vol. 68, No. 271, 1969, p. 96.

⁵³ Dindier Gondola, *Tropical Cowboys: Westerns, Violence and Masculinity in Kinshasa*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2016, p. 42. In Kenya, this system was known as *kipande*.

⁵⁴ Teresa Barnes, "Am I a Man? Gender and the Pass Laws in Urban Colonial Zimbabwe, 1930-80," *African Studies Review*, Vol. 40, No. 1, 1997, pp. 59-81.

difference in the number of burglaries in the Township.⁵⁵ McCracken also posits that no Africans were allowed to purchase property and that throughout much of the colonial period to the early 1950s, most European shop owners served Africans through a window.⁵⁶ Using the theme of urban segregation as an example, we are able to see how scholarship on the urban history of Africa interfaces with Malawi's urban past.

Fourth, McCracken discusses colonial attempts to control the urban space and urban lives in Nyasaland. This practice was based on colonial authorities' belief that urbanization was demoralizing to Africans.⁵⁷ Against that background, colonial officials had specific anxieties as regards questions of morality and crime, which they sought to control by attempting to organize the life of the African. For example, in the case of South Africa, Bickford-Smith discusses worries over immorality, slums, and crime in South African towns.⁵⁸ One issue that scholars of urban Africa have examined is that of government regulation of liquor. Some scholars have argued that colonial control of alcohol was not only a way of controlling black drinking, but also an instrument of segregation.⁵⁹ However, using the case study of Kenya, Ambler shows that British officials repeatedly and vehemently complained of the dangers posed by endemic drunkenness. He argues that the officials viewed the practice of drinking as a source of social disorder.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed," p. 262.

⁵⁶ McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed," p. 250.

⁵⁷ Andrew Burton, *African Underclass*, Oxford: James Currey, 2005; Andrew Burton, "Urchins, Loafers and the Cult of the Cowboy: Urbanisation and Delinquency in Dar es Salaam, 1919-1961," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 42, 2001, p. 199.

⁵⁸ Bickford-Smith, *The Emergence of the South African Metropolis*.

⁵⁹ Maylam, "Explaining the Apartheid City," p. 31.

⁶⁰ Charles Ambler, "Drunks, Brewers, and Chiefs: Alcohol Regulation in Colonial Kenya," in Susanna Barrows and Robin Room (eds), *Drinking Behaviour*

In Nyasaland's case, McCracken reveals that in 1909, Blantyre and Limbe Town Councils banned the sale and consumption of the locally distilled spirit, *kachasu*. He explains that this locally distilled spirit had replaced the brandy that had previously been obtained from Portuguese traders in the late nineteenth century. However, following an international tariff that limited European spirits in the Zambesi basin, the locally distilled type experienced a rise in sales, a development that attracted the disapproval of the colonial authorities and missionaries.⁶¹ It would seem that despite the proscription, Africans continued to sell *kachasu* because in 1911, *kachasu* was made illegal, and residents were instructed to punish sharply those involved.

In response, the brewers, who were primarily women, moved their activities to the outer boundaries of the town and continued as before.⁶² McCracken further reveals that in 1915, the government introduced a licensing system which gave the legal right to sell beer at designated urban places only to male Africans. As a coping measure, the women opened their bars by paying a fee to the licence holder.

Although the police raided distillers regularly with at least 100 individuals arrested every year; the women traders were not deterred. McCracken asserts that in 1945, the *kachasu* distillers had no difficulty paying the 5 pound fines. Even when the government increased the penalties, women organized themselves and worked together to ensure that they found the money.⁶³ Through these cases, McCracken shows the resilience of an underclass, which had limited economic opportunities save for the informal sector to which beer brewing and spirit distilling belonged. As was the case in Tanganyika, colonial

and Belief in Modern History, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991, pp. 165-183.

⁶¹ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 290.

⁶² McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 290.

⁶³ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 291.

policies and laws criminalized many of the economic activities that Africans adopted in the urban space.⁶⁴

Beyond alcohol regulation, McCracken also discusses how the colonial government controlled, and regulated urban settlements as a way of ensuring urban order. Of particular interest here is Chichiri, which was labelled in 1948 as "the gin palace and brothel area of the district." McCracken claims that hundreds of young men went to Chichiri to drink beer and *kachasu*, dance with bar girls and listen to South African music.⁶⁵ He further argues that although Chichiri had many households and businesses, the government designated it as an industrial zone in 1955. The government started evicting the residents amidst protests from Africans which reached a climax in 1959 when, taking advantage of the presence of Rhodesian troops during the State of Emergency, the government destroyed a thousand houses.⁶⁶ Government moved the evicted residents to Bangwe, east of Limbe, and Michiru west of Blantyre.⁶⁷ The urban space in Nyasaland was a site of contestations between Africans and colonial officials. This is a theme that has the potential for further research. Historians of Malawi may consider exploring the removal of Africans from town centres to peripheries and the African response to such moves as a theme for further study.

Fifth, McCracken discusses the theme of urban associations, which historians of urban Africa have also considered.⁶⁸ However, he argues that unlike in East and West African towns where tribal societies were conventional, tribal societies were few in Blantyre. This

⁶⁴ Andrew Burton, *African Underclass*.

⁶⁵ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 291.

⁶⁶ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 292.

⁶⁷ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 293.

⁶⁸ M. Tarmakin, "Tribal Associations, Tribal Solidarity and Tribal Chauvinism in a Kenya Town," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 14, No. 2, 1973, pp. 257-274; Tiyaambe Zeleza and Cassandra Rachel Veney, *Leisure in Urban Africa*, Trenton: Africa World Press, 2003.

may be due to the presence of stabilized workers that lived in peri-urban villages such as Ndirande who needed less communal support than the long term migrants.⁶⁹ Further, McCracken argues that the few associations that existed, such as the Alhomwe Tribal Representative Association formed in 1943, were more concerned with pressing a particular case on the government than in providing needy kinsmen with social help. Instead, religious affiliation was more critical especially in the new planned government townships of Soche and Kanjedza. These new townships, lacked the network of traditional authorities that Ndirande possessed. In that regard, churches such as the Blantyre Synod of the CCAP and the Roman Catholic Church played influential social and religious roles in disciplining their members and providing support.⁷⁰ Perhaps what remains to be known is the experience of the other towns such as Zomba.

The sixth theme that McCracken discusses is that of crime in colonial urban Malawi. Crime is a subject that has received considerable attention from scholars of urban Africa.⁷¹ McCracken argues that generally, compared to the standards of our time, urban crime in Nyasaland was low. However, in relation to the other towns in Nyasaland, Blantyre was the primary source of serious crime.

McCracken records that generally, figures of murder, manslaughter, and housebreaking were distinctly low in colonial Malawi. For example, for the whole territory, the police only registered 85 cases of murder and manslaughter and 2,070 cases of

⁶⁹ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 301.

⁷⁰ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 301.

⁷¹ Andrew Burton, "Urchins, Loafers and the Cult of the Cowboy"; Burton, "Jomii ya Waholifu: The Growth of Crime in a Colonial African Urban Centre: Dar es Salaam, Tanganyika, 1919-1961"; Laurent Fourchard, "Urban Poverty, Urban Crime and Crime Control: The Lagos and Ibadan Cases, 1929-1945," in Salm and Falola (eds), *African Urban Spaces in Historical Perspective*, pp. 291-319.

burglary and housebreaking in 1957.⁷² Such statistics are much lower compared to the cases reported for Dar-es-Salaam where there were at least 2,315 cases of burglary and break-ins in 1952.⁷³

McCracken also discusses urban delinquency as one of the criminal problems researched in urban scholarship on Africa. Scholarship has shown that specific forms of juvenile delinquency, those organized in gang activities developed in African cities such as Cape Coast, Durban, Johannesburg, Ibadan, and Dar-es-Salaam.⁷⁴ In his analysis of Blantyre urbanization, McCracken does not discuss gangs but notes that there were reported cases of juvenile delinquents who preyed on bus passengers and market hawkers and indulged in petty pilfering in Indian stores. But the number of such cases in 1950, for example, remained low.⁷⁵ For the territory as a whole, only 50 juveniles were convicted of theft in the mid-1950s, with the figure rising only slightly higher to 73 in 1960.

McCracken also considers prostitution as a crime in the colonial towns, particularly in Blantyre. He observed that in 1890, there were reports of Ngoni women who were brought to Blantyre by pimps to work as prostitutes. However, McCracken notes that the sources he consulted did not illuminate on whether such a trade continued or not. In the 1950s, there were reports of innumerable girls in Blantyre who earned their living as prostitutes but never came before a judge. McCracken posits that possibly these were not necessarily professional prostitutes but rather poor women who turned to

⁷² McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 300.

⁷³ Burton, "Jomili ya waholifu," p. 99.

⁷⁴ Burton, "Urchins, Loafers and the Cult of the Cowboy;" Clive Glaser, *Bo-Tsotsi, the Youth Gangs of Soweto, 1935–1976*, Oxford: James Currey, 2000; and Simon Heap, "Jaguda Boys: Pick Pocketing in Ibadan, 1930–1960," *Urban History*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 1997, pp. 324–343.

⁷⁵ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, pp. 300–301.

prostitution as a strategy of survival, as also noted by Iliffe.⁷⁶ In as much as McCracken shows that the levels of crime were low, it would be interesting to investigate the history of urban crime throughout the colonial period to understand what factors influenced the occurrence of such incidents.

Seventh, McCracken considers popular culture in colonial urban Nyasaland. Such a contribution also fits within the studies on popular culture, youth culture, and leisure in urban Africa. It is worth mentioning, however, that McCracken does not focus on the African residential areas developed in the 1950s, such as Soche and Naperi. Neither does the discussion include the experience of Africans that lived in the Railways-owned African compounds at Mpingwe. What he discusses mostly are the experiences of people that lived in the peri-urban villages of Ndirande and Chichiri. He also describes briefly the options for leisure that were available for Europeans by stating that Blantyre, compared to other towns, boasted the only hotel of substance in Nyasaland as well as a weekly cinema and a whites-only club.⁷⁷

Both traditional and imported music and dance forms played an essential role in the social lives of the people, particularly the youth. For example, *beni* and *mganda* were being danced in the town alongside new dance forms such as *sinjonjo*, a Malawian version of jive and twist. Jive and twist were popular dances in much of urban Africa in the 1950s, including in colonial Senegal and Tanzania.⁷⁸ John McCracken shows that youth danced to *jole*, a dance which he describes as shocking because the partners embraced each other. In

⁷⁶ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 301; John Iliffe, *The African Poor: A History*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 271.

⁷⁷ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 301.

⁷⁸ Helene Neveu Kringelbach, *Dance Circles: Movement, Morality, and Self-Fashioning in Urban Senegal*, Berghahn Books, 2013, p. 99; Mahir Saul and Ralph Austen, *Viewing Cinema in the Twenty-First Century: Art Films and the Nollywood Video Revolution*, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 2010.

terms of music, McCracken argues that *kwela*, which originated from South Africa, was popular among adolescents.⁷⁹ It can be argued, therefore, that in Blantyre, popular music and dance constituted both indigenous and foreign forms.

Football is yet another subject that McCracken discusses in line with other scholars on popular culture in urban Africa. As Laura Fair has argued sport, like many other recreational activities, was purported to teach respect for the values of time, discipline, and authority in the colonized people.⁸⁰ For Nyasaland, football was first played at the Blantyre Mission in 1880. Later, the police, prisons, and *boma* administrative officers played the game in the 1920s. However, the sport was only organized formally in 1933. Such a development can be credited to the Ndirande Welfare Club which, upon its foundation in 1933, had a football team and a playing field.⁸¹ Following this, several other teams emerged which included Imperial Tobacco Company, Ndirande Welfare Club, Michiru, Abrahams, and Ndirande Lions.⁸²

Further, the popularity of the sport in Blantyre was facilitated by the football specials run by the Nyasaland Railway Company between Blantyre and Limbe, which made the game famous by 1946. Second, credit should go to the football leagues such as the Shire Highlands African League in 1938, organized by Frederick Sangala of Ndirande. McCracken argues that, in as much as Europeans intended football to be a tool for cultural imperialism, it ended up becoming an African activity.⁸³ Overall, more Malawians experienced different forms of

⁷⁹ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 302.

⁸⁰ Laura Fair, "Kickin it: Leisure, Politics, and Football in Colonial Zanzibar, 1900s-1950," *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute*, Vol. 67, No. 2, 1997, p. 224; McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 302.

⁸¹ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 302.

⁸² McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 303.

⁸³ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 303.

urban culture as labour migrants in Johannesburg or Salisbury, where about 10,000 of them were living and working.⁸⁴

The final theme that McCracken tackles is the development of labour movements within the urban environment of Blantyre. This theme resonates with such works as Mothibe's on worker militancy in colonial Zimbabwe.⁸⁵ However, there are two main arguments that McCracken makes in that regard. Firstly, that worker militancy in Blantyre developed because of urban deprivation, such as poor housing conditions, poor wages, and rises in food prices in the years after the Second World War. To that effect, the first urban-based worker's movement in Nyasaland emerged in 1945 when members of the Nyasaland Teachers Association met in Blantyre to press for higher wages.⁸⁶ Between 1946 and 1948, several protests took place in Blantyre involving transport workers, domestic servants, and council workers, among others. Such action not only demonstrated the workers' dissatisfaction with the urban conditions, particularly the rise in the cost of living but also the growth of class consciousness.⁸⁷

Secondly, McCracken argues that the distinctive form that urbanization took in Blantyre influenced the character of political mobilization. In that regard, segregation created a frustrated people, especially in the 1950s, when racialism still guided African mobility and the housing policy. Therefore he argues that Africa's new men, who had a favourable opportunity for economic self-advancement, notably Lawrence Makata and Lali Lubani of Ndirande, assisted in the construction of a distinctive political culture in Blantyre.⁸⁸ For example, Lali Lubani, became the chairman of the Nyasaland African

⁸⁴ McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed," p. 247.

⁸⁵ T.H. Mothibe, "African Worker's Militancy as a Basis for Post-war Nationalism in Colonial Zimbabwe, 1945-1953," *Trans African Journal of History*, Vol. 23, 1994, pp. 158-183.

⁸⁶ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 296.

⁸⁷ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 295.

⁸⁸ McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed," pp. 259-260.

Drivers Association, the first trade union to be registered in Nyasaland. The association was subsequently affiliated to the Nyasaland African Congress.⁸⁹ What is more, Lali Lubani, Lawrence Makata, and other businesspeople played an influential role in the Nyasaland African Congress. They were principal financial backers and urban power brokers: linking the party to the urban poor and providing cars and lorries to transport members to meetings.⁹⁰ McCracken shows that we cannot discuss the growth nationalism in Malawi without emphasizing the role of urbanite living in Blantyre.

Another aspect covered by McCracken within the urban setting is the provision of water and sanitation in Blantyre and Zomba. He noted that the town council installed a piped supply of drinking water in Blantyre through a grant from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund in 1933. However, no waterborne system of sewage control was constructed. In addition, little effort was made by the town council to keep pace with the growing population.⁹¹ Although the council improved sanitation conditions in 1950, it did not extend this to the African urban population.⁹² McCracken emphasizes that the sanitation status of Blantyre was deplorable as evident in the quote below:

In the central areas of the township, over-crowding was rife, and subdivision of trading plots up to 1/40th of an acre was recorded. Shop assistants were sleeping in shops, their beds being screened off by temporary partitions. African servants were sleeping on the verandahs of shops, in bathrooms and even in disused latrines ... wastewater latrine washings and liquid excrement were disposed of from plots by the earth, or broken concrete drains to the main road drains in the townships, which are open and flow through the main streets to the nearest river bed. The water in the river beds was thus grossly polluted, and this water was the primary source from which African domestic supplies were drawn and in

⁸⁹ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 298.

⁹⁰ McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed," p. 264.

⁹¹ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 293.

⁹² McCracken, "Blantyre Transformed," p. 255.

which ablutions and the washing of laundry took place ... night soil disposal sites were situated dangerously in the centre of built-up areas and were maintained in a shockingly filthy state.⁹³

For Zomba, McCracken observed that from the development of the town until 1934, there was no public system for the disposal of sewage. This situation resulted in the burying of human excrement in pits dug in householder's gardens, a condition which contributed to the prevalence of dysentery among officials and their families. However, in 1934, a scheme of water flushed sewage and pipe-borne drinking water begun.⁹⁴ However, the discussion on these facilities does not extend to the experiences of the 1950s when Blantyre, for example, experienced rapid population growth. Whereas in 1945 Blantyre-Limbe had 3,594 Africans, by 1956 the population had increased to 55,000 and rose again to 110,000 by 1966.⁹⁵

Conclusion

McCracken's work does not address all historical questions on urban Malawi but it illuminates much of Malawi's urban experience, especially in the colonial period. Within the context of this chapter, some questions have not been discussed owing to considerations of space. But the key point is that McCracken's work largely lays the groundwork for further research on Malawi's urban past. It is against this background that his work is viewed an indispensable contribution to Malawi's urban history. Historians of urban Malawi may do further research on contestations over the urban space, urban cultures in African townships developed since the 1950s and Africans' role in shaping urbanization among other themes. This chapter maintains that McCracken has made a foundational contribution to the study of Malawi's urban history.

⁹³ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 294.

⁹⁴ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 285.

⁹⁵ McCracken, *History of Malawi*, p. 292; Power, "Individual Enterprise," p. 25.

Ecological Change and Food Production: State Intervention into Peasant Agriculture in the Southern Province of Colonial Malawi, 1891-1960

Bryson G. Nkhoma

Introduction

Since the late 1980s, ecological change and its impact on the country's development became a subject of scholarly attention in John McCracken's historiography.⁹⁶ In large measure, McCracken contended that while colonialism disrupted African ecologies, its impact varied with time, gender and class, and that, in some respects, it created conditions for the survival of African livelihoods. McCracken made this argument in response to the dominant underdevelopment scholarship of Leroy Vail and Helge Kjekshus, which considered African encounter with Christianity, colonialism and Western capitalism as the anti-thesis to African development.⁹⁷ In McCracken's

⁹⁶ For details, see John McCracken, "Fishing and the Colonial Economy: The Case of Malawi," *The Journal of African History*, Vol. 28, No. 3, 1987, pp. 413-429; McCracken, "Colonialism, Capitalism and Ecological Crisis in Malawi: a Reassessment," in D. Anderson and R. Grove, (eds), *Conservation in Africa: People, Policies and Practice*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 63-78; McCracken, "Conservation and Resistance in Colonial Malawi: the 'Dead North' Revisited," in W. Beinart and J. McGregor (eds), *Social History and the African Environments*, Oxford: James Currey, 2003, pp. 155-174; McCracken, *A History of Malawi, 1859-1966*, Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012.

⁹⁷ For details, see for example, H. Kjekshus, *Ecology Control and Economic Development in East Africa History*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 1977; L. Vail, "Ecology and History: The Example of Eastern Zambia," *The Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 1977, pp. 129-155.

view, such assertions oversimplified the dynamic and complex ways by which colonialism and capitalism impacted on African economies.

This chapter examines the effects of state intervention on peasants' food production in the face of ecological changes from the time the country became a British colony in 1891 to 1960, a year before Africans formed a majority in the colonial government. While agreeing with McCracken's historiography, the study goes beyond its analysis, and argues that colonial pathologization of the peasants as lazy, conservative, destructive and imprudent, limited the local acceptability of the agricultural interventions. Exploiting the prevailing conflicts among colonial officials themselves, the peasants, however, successfully resisted and survived the effects of state interventions, and thus cultivated space for food security within state hegemony.

By fore-fronting the effects of state ecological interventions on peasants' food security, the chapter also complements earlier Malawian historiography, which has generically analyzed state-peasant relations over ecological changes and conservation.⁹⁸ With particular

⁹⁸ For details, see W. Beinart, "Agricultural Planning and the Late Colonial Technical Imagination, 1940-1960," in *Malawi: An Alternative Pattern of Development*, Edinburgh: Centre for African Studies, 1985, pp. 69-90; W. Beinart, "Soil Erosion, Conservation and Ideas of Development: A Southern African Exploration, 1900 -1960," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 11, No. 1, 1984, pp. 52-83; E. Green, "A Lasting Story: Conservation and Agricultural Extension Services in Colonial Malawi," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 50, No. 2, 2009, pp. 247-267; W. Mulwafu, "Soil Erosion and State Intervention in Estate Production in the Shire Highlands Economy of Colonial Malawi, 1891-1964," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 28, No. 1, 2002, pp. 25-43; W. Mulwafu, *Conservation Song: A History of State-Peasant Relations and the Environment in Malawi, 1860-2000*, Cambridge: The White Horse Press, 2010; E. Mandala, *Work and Control in Peasant Economy: A History of the Tchiri Valley in Malawi, 1859-1960*, Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1990; E. Mandala, *End of Chidyerano: A History of Food and Everyday Life in the Lower Tchiri Valley in Malawi, 1860 -2004*, Portsmouth: Heinemann, 2005.

attention to varied peasants' responses, this study demonstrates the extent to which state ecological interventions implemented with minimal respect to pre-existing local practices presented the risk of accentuating rather than addressing peasant food insecurity in the period under study.

Early Colonial Ecological Concerns and Peasant Production, 1891- 1930

From the time the country became a British colony in 1891, the colonial state expressed concerns over ecological changes and their effects on the country's agriculture. Sir Harry Johnston, the first British Consul, for example, expressed fears that, although the country was rich in natural resources, the resources might soon disappear because of peasants' practices of shifting cultivation, overstocking, stream-bank and hilltop cultivation and unregulated hunting.⁹⁹ Coupled with the trend of rainfall variability, which the colonial state witnessed in the first two decades after its establishment, with the worst droughts occurring in 1897, 1903 and 1910, the state became particularly concerned with peasants' practices that were deemed to be ecologically destructive.¹⁰⁰ While these events were not unusual to the peasants, for the state, the recurrences were indicative of the extent to which peasant production, upon which the country's supply of foodstuffs relied, was vulnerable to rainfall variability.¹⁰¹ In particular, the droughts affected the capacity of the peasants to produce sufficient foodstuffs for their subsistence as well as for sale to white employers in the country.¹⁰² The state erroneously associated the famine that followed the droughts with what it perceived as

⁹⁹ See H.H. Johnston, *The British Central Africa*, New York: Edward Arnold, 1897.

¹⁰⁰ See S.S. Murray, *A Handbook of Nyasaland*, Zomba: Government Printer, 1922.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Nyasaland Protectorate, Native Foodstuffs Ordinance, 1912.

imprudent African practices such as shifting cultivation, deforestation, overstocking, tribal wars and excessive beer drinking.¹⁰³

Although the state established the Agricultural Department to spearhead sustainable agricultural production in 1908, it was only after the 1910/11 drought that it began to take sustained interest in transforming the so-called ecologically unfriendly peasant practices. Taking advantage of the rainfall failure, the state developed laws with which to regulate peasants' production and consumption practices. For instance, in 1911, the state passed an Intoxicating Liquor Ordinance which prohibited the brewing and selling of beer by peasants in the country.¹⁰⁴ The state alleged that beer brewing and consumption accounted for massive deforestation, wastage of peasants' foods, and that it undermined peasants' agricultural productivity. The state argued that peasants used a lot of firewood in beer brewing, and that by prohibiting them from drinking beer, the state would also encourage the peasants to devote the time they spent on beer drinking to agricultural activities.¹⁰⁵

Unsurprisingly, the enactment of this regulatory policy did not sit well with the peasants as the policy interfered with beer drinking which had significant religious and socio-cultural values to society.¹⁰⁶ As in most parts of east and southern Africa, the peasants valued beer drinking not only as a favourite pastime but also a means to social cohesion as well as accessing food-for-work communal labour.¹⁰⁷ By

¹⁰³ MNA S1/170/11 Intoxicating Liquor Ordinance.

¹⁰⁴ Nyasaland Protectorate, Intoxicating Liquor Ordinance of 1911.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of the Agriculture and Forestry Department Year Ending 31 March 1912.

¹⁰⁷ See for example J. Crush and C. Ambler (eds), *Liquour and Labour in Southern Africa*, Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002; J. Willis, *Potent Brews: A Social History of Alcohol in East Africa, 1550 – 1999*, Boydell and Brewer, 2002; H. Moore and M. Vaughan, *Cutting Down Trees: Gender, Nutrition and Agricultural Changes in the Northern Province of Zambia, 1890-1990*, Portsmouth: Heinemann, 1994.

allowing people to brew and sell beer once in a month on the same day as stipulated in the ordinance, the peasants argued that the ordinance would result in too much beer remaining unsold on such a day.¹⁰⁸ Since beer drinking was traditionally restricted to the harvest seasons when peasants had sufficient foodstuffs, peasants felt that beer brewing was not necessarily a cause of food insecurity as colonial officials argued.¹⁰⁹

As a result, the state found it extremely difficult to reinforce the Liquor Ordinance among peasants in the country. Posing as guardians of the society, the chiefs found it morally difficult to enforce this ordinance on their subjects. During monthly meetings at the District Commissioners (DC)'s offices, chiefs from the country often objected, in strong terms, to the idea of limiting the selling of beer.¹¹⁰ For example, the DC for Zomba proposed to the Governor to grant beer-brewing licenses to individuals rather than villages. He also advised that licensed women should prepare beer consecutively to avoid excessive beer leftovers.¹¹¹

After World War I, state ecological interventions focused more on improving rather than regulating peasants' food production and consumption. Given the increased demand for foodstuffs as well as the resultant conflicts between the state and settlers over procurement of these foodstuffs, the state resolved to improve peasants' productivity to meet the food demands. The state was equally influenced by the prevailing postwar discourses of 'Trusteeship' and

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Int. Witness Kalambula, Katanda Village, Zomba. 9.11.2016. He was aged 72 when I interviewed him. He is one of the progressive farmers in the basin. He inherited his wealth from his father who used to be a progressive farmer in the area in the 1930s. His father died in the 1960s at the age of 85.

¹¹⁰ MNA S1/21/19 Monthly Reports Zomba District, 1918-1919. This was presented in a memorandum dated July 1918.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

‘Mandate’ colonialism, which advocated colonial paternal responsibility of improving the productive capacities of Africans through education, rural development and agricultural transformation in preparation for their self-government.¹¹² Since then, and until the outbreak of the Second World War in 1939, the state proposed to improve peasants’ productivity through new cultivation methods, introduction of drought resistant food crops and conservation.

For instance, soon after the end of World War 1 in 1919, the state warmly accepted the proposal by Wallace Rose, a philanthropist and private agriculturalist based in the Southern Province, to launch a scheme to train peasants in sustainable agricultural methods. Embattled with conflicts over peasants’ foodstuffs with settler farmers and other employers, the Director of Agriculture, James McCalls, gave Rose a go-ahead to launch the scheme.¹¹³ While supporting the idea, the Senior Agriculturalist in the Department, E. W. Davy, however, raised doubts about peasants’ appreciation of Rose’s endeavours to improve their production practices. He contended that,

The native is by nature ungrateful and would never consider it his duty to even offer his crops for sale to the person to whom he was most indebted for them. It would be impossible to give the natives even the most indirect suggestion that he should offer his crop to Mr Wallace Rose, who would thereupon, I am convinced, be a disappointed man when he sees the results of several years of hard and deserving work being acquired by a number of unscrupulous outsiders.¹¹⁴

¹¹² E.M. Bennet, “Mandate and Trusteeship,” *Encyclopedia of American Foreign Policy*, 2002, p. 1.

¹¹³ MNA A3/2/157 Miscellaneous Reports -Memo of the Director of Agriculture to the Governor dated 21 January 1919.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

The Agriculture Director, however, dismissed the reservations arguing that settler farmers were equally unreliable producers in the country.¹¹⁵ Unfortunately, the Director was transferred from the country in 1922 before the idea of improving peasants' agriculture was fully realized.

Notwithstanding, the idea resurrected in 1924, when A. Hornby, a Chemist in the Agriculture Department, advanced claims about the prevalence of adverse soil erosion especially in the Shire Highlands, where population was dense and massive land alienation had taken place.¹¹⁶ Hornby's claims were echoed by the Commissioner for Southern Province in 1925 who stated that peasants' crops and their production methods were ecologically destructive.¹¹⁷ Although there was little empirical evidence to substantiate these claims in terms of the magnitude of the problem as well as specific examples of the affected areas as observed by Mulwafu,¹¹⁸ the Director of Agriculture, E. Wortley, circulated to all DCs in 1928 a list of suggestions on how to improve peasants' agriculture and deal with famine in the rural parts of the country based on the claims.¹¹⁹ The measures included encouraging peasants to plant large food gardens, organizing peasants to hold village food reserves, improving methods of food cultivation, growing drought resisting food crops, and promotion of commercial production of food crops.

¹¹⁵ MNA, the Director of Agriculture, Letter to the Land Officer, 30 April 1920.

¹¹⁶ A.J. Hornby, "The Erosion of Arable Soil in Nyasaland and Methods of Prevention," in F. Dixey, J.B. Clements and A.J. Hornby, *The Destruction of Vegetation and its Relation to Climate, Water, Water Supply and Soil Fertility*, Zomba: Government Printer, 1924, Bulletin No. 1.

¹¹⁷ Malawi National Archives (Hereafter MNA), S1/1042/25 Annual Report Southern Province 1924/25.

¹¹⁸ Wapulumuka Mulwafu, "Soil Erosion and State Interventions into Estate Production," p. 28.

¹¹⁹ MNA S1/333/27 Scheme to Securing Reasonable Research on Native Food Stuffs- Letter of the Director of Agriculture to all District Resident Officers on Safeguarding Food Shortages, 9 January 1928.

However, peasants were apathetic to the listed measures. On 24 November 1928, the Assistant Conservation Officer from Mulanje, R. G. Ross Townsend, complained to the Agriculture Director on peasants' poor response to the measures. He argued,

Another hindrance to the work of reforestation for the natives is their own apathy. They will say they are willing to do it and that is as far as they will go, unless there is someone to keep probing. It does not seem to be realized what these difficulties have to be contended with but cases such as the above are daily occurrence and make one's work extremely difficult.¹²⁰

Subsequently, the state resolved to use food-for-work conservation public works to encourage the peasants to develop a culture of conserving the environment. Yet the peasants vowed to rather die of famine than participate in such public conservation works.¹²¹

Soil Conservation Policy, 1930-1938

Between 1930 and 1938, state ecological intervention predominantly centred on the formulation of soil conservation policy to address the problem of soil erosion which the state considered as the major setback to the country's agricultural development. Influenced by the growing scientific concerns subsequent to the American Dust Bowl (1930-36), which, because of uncontrolled intensive cultivation, led to heavy erosion of the soil in America, the state became extremely fearful of a similar occurrence in the country.¹²² It feared that the destruction of forests and natural vegetation on steep slopes because

¹²⁰ MNA S1/828/28 Southern Province report 24 November 1928-Extract from a Resident Report by Assistant Conservation Officer, Mr Ross Townshend.

¹²¹ MNA S1/545/28 Southern Province Report 1928, Famine relief, Mulanje District Report of 8 January 1929.

¹²² For details, see D. Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s*, Oxford: OUP, 1979; also D. Anderson, "Depression, Dust Bowl, Demography and Drought: The Colonial State and Soil Conservation in East Africa during the 1930s," *African Affairs*, Vol. 83, No. 332, 1984, pp. 321-343.

of overcrowding, peasants' poor farming systems and uncontrolled bush burning would result in acceleration of soil erosion in the country.¹²³ Other African practices that were also considered destructive to the soil were shifting cultivation, stream-bank cultivation, hill slope cultivation as well as animal stocking.¹²⁴

State concerns over soil erosion also intensified because of the rapid population growth as depicted in the censuses of 1901, 1911, 1921, 1926 and 1931, which the state claimed had adversely affected the country's ecologies.¹²⁵ The population was reported to have grown from 737,724 in 1901 to 1,603,454 in 1931, with the settlement of the Lomwe in the Southern Province, which intensified from 1900, as the major contributory factor.¹²⁶ The state alleged that the Lomwe settlement in Shire Highlands was causing unsustainable deforestation, soil degradation and the dwindling of water resources in the Crown Lands.¹²⁷ Thus, the state became particularly interested in addressing soil erosion in its conservation policies.¹²⁸

The state, however, was oblivious of the fact that the alleged influx of Lomwe was a critical factor for the country's agricultural labour supply. Such sentiments also contradicted earlier assertions on the significance of Lomwe labour for the success of both the settlers and peasants as indicated in the 1927 labour census report. The report appreciatively stated that, "It is no exaggeration to say at the present

¹²³ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of the Agriculture Department for the Year Ending 31 March 1933.

¹²⁴ MNA A3/2/227 Soil Erosion Prevention 1930 -1938.

¹²⁵ See Malawi Government, *Lake Chilwa Wetland Management Plan*, Lilongwe: Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Affairs, 2001.

¹²⁶ Malawi Government, *Malawi Population Census 1966*, Zomba: Government Printer, 1967.

¹²⁷ MNA S1/543/23 Southern Province report for the Year ending 31 March 1927.

¹²⁸ MNA A3/2/227 Soil Erosion Prevention 1930 -1938.

time were the supply of the Anguru labour cut off or seriously diminished, half the plantations in the Mulanje, Thyolo and Lower districts would have to be closed and the whole plantation industry in the Shire Highlands would be disorganized."¹²⁹ Similarly, the Lomwe brought with them the idea of cultivating cassava which, though late maturing and less nutritious, was relatively drought resistant and less labour intensive.¹³⁰

Notwithstanding, the state continued with the idea of instituting measures to arrest the spread of soil erosion. First, it formed a Native Agriculture Committee in 1931 largely to curtail "the destruction of forests and natural vegetation on steep slopes, and to address the lack of measures in native systems of agriculture for retaining and maintaining fertility, uneconomic land use in the growing of crops such as finger millet, overcrowding due to immigration, and to control bush burning."¹³¹ However, the Agriculture Director, W. Small, was less enthusiastic about implementing these measures. For example, soon after the Committee determined to restore the ecologies by improving peasant production practices, Small sarcastically argued that, "the native systems can and must be improved, but they are worthy of study which still show how best they can develop along their own lines and in accordance with their principles."¹³²

Erik Green notes that it was only after excessive pressure from the Colonial Office in 1936 that the state began to create structures

¹²⁹ MNA S1/428/27 Draft Labour Census Report.

¹³⁰ M. Vaughan, "Food Production and Family Labour in Southern Malawi: The Shire Highlands and Upper Lower Shire Valley in the Early Colonial Period," *Journal of African History*, Vol. 23, No. 3, 1982, p. 360.

¹³¹ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of the Agriculture Department for the Year Ending 31 March 1933.

¹³² CO 525/141/34072, Memorandum on Agriculture Development Scheme Prepared by the Director of Agriculture, Enclosed in a Dispatch from the Governor to Secretary of State, 21 July 1931.

that supported sustainable peasant agriculture in most rural parts of the country.¹³³ Pressed by circulating fears about the recurrence of the Dust Bowl in British colonies as well as the League of Nations concerns about hunger and malnutrition, the Colonial Office strongly advised its reluctant Nyasaland colonial officials to become determined in curbing soil erosion and improving peasant food production.¹³⁴ The Health Department of the League of Nations had earlier released a report of its survey on 'Nutrition and Health' in 1935 which showed the existence of hunger and malnutrition as major threats to most countries' development, and therefore, called on nations to consider improvement of peasant agriculture in their food security interventions.¹³⁵

Since the state attributed the growth of soil erosion to the peasants, it framed its agricultural interventions in ways that targeted peasant practices such as shifting cultivation, stream-bank cultivation, hill slope cultivation and animal stocking.¹³⁶ For instance, an Agronomic Sub-Committee formed by the Native Welfare Committee in 1937 was mandated to facilitate "better utilization of agricultural lands, utilization of poorer classes of soil, protection of hill slopes, wind breaks, reduced population and evils of overstocking as well as settlement of immigrants."¹³⁷ In the same year, the Committee appointed Paul Topham as the first Soil Erosion Officer,

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ MNA, S1/1381/36 Official Dispatch from the Secretary of State for Colonies J.H. Thomas on Nutrition in the Colonial Empire, 1936.

¹³⁵ For details, see for example, League of Nations, Nutrition and Health Report, Geneva, 1935. Also mentioned in J. Shaw, *World Food Security: A History Since 1945*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

¹³⁶ Ibid.

¹³⁷ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of the Agriculture Department for the Year Ending 31 March 1937.

and formulated a soil conservation policy to guide ecological interventions into peasant agriculture.¹³⁸

However, peasants resisted the soil conservation measures arguing that their cultivation methods were sufficiently responsive to the demographic and ecological changes of the time. One informant argued that, "the peasants were able, in the precolonial times, to produce foodstuffs using the means, which the state criticized as ecologically destructive."¹³⁹ Most peasants considered food shortages in the country rather as a net output of land alienation as well as the restrictions of peasants' production through market regulations rather than their farming methods.¹⁴⁰ In fact, some chiefs from Southern Province kept on reminding the state of the problem of land alienation as the cause of food insecurity. "The alienation of land to Europeans is almost the only question, which is regularly brought forward by the headmen at every meeting," reported the Provincial Commissioner for the South. "They have been told over and over again that Government has taken steps to protect their land. It is, I think, urgent that the proposed legislation should be enacted without further delay."¹⁴¹ Because of these local reservations over state agricultural policies, together with conflicting opinions among its officials, the state was unable to implement the policies until the outbreak of World War II.

World War II, Peasants and State Ecological Interventions, 1939-1948

The outbreak of World War II in 1939 created a serious need for foodstuffs for soldiers, support staff and the numerous refugees who

¹³⁸ MNA A3/2/227 Soil Erosion Prevention 1930 -1938.

¹³⁹ Interview: Wetu Mdala, Manyenga Village, Zomba, 17.12.2003. Aged 98. In saying this, she was recalling what her parents used to tell her before they died in the 1930s.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

¹⁴¹ MNA S1/543/28 Southern Province Report, 31 December 1927.

were displaced by the war. To meet the need, the state embarked on various projects to expand food production in the country. The projects were aimed to expand foodstuff markets, increase production of food crops and conserve natural resources. While the state used the first two objectives to address the immediate supply of foodstuffs, it deemed the latter as an essential variable to ensure long-term sustainability of food production in the country. In his report of 1940, the Director, A. S. Richardson, stated that,

The changing phase in the agricultural economy created by the war called for continued review of the agricultural policy. The main task was to maintain or increase the production of our economic crops in order to provide essential supplies for the UK and their Empire colonies. In giving effect to these measures the necessity for preserving and maintaining the fertility of the soil was kept in the forefront and our energies were directed to achieve the objectives, not by any increase in acreage or an increase in manpower employed, but by improved cultural methods, which necessitate an increased effort on the part of all individuals.¹⁴²

However, there was lack of cooperation from the peasants with state intervention throughout the war-times. In fact, the state in 1944 complained about general loss of morale for agricultural work despite efforts to improve production and marketing of foodstuffs. The DC for Zomba observed that,

Unsatisfactory climatic conditions in most areas, disheartening response to all efforts to improve food production, the lack of interest shown in Zomba Agricultural Show and the regrettable apathy shown by most chiefs in all matters relating to agriculture within their areas was a major concern.¹⁴³

Apparently, peasants were unhappy with the state's incessant demands to produce more foodstuffs. With the exception of food traders and progressive farmers engaged by the state as conservation agents, most peasants resented the state's continued encouragement

¹⁴² Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of the Agriculture Department in the Year Ending 31 March 1940.

¹⁴³ MNA NSZ 4/1/5 Zomba District Reports 1940-1947 – 1943/44 Report.

of food production with minimal damage to natural resources.¹⁴⁴ While this had merits in the long-term sustainability of soil fertility, these peasants contended that conservation methods were labour intensive and discouraged the use of other practices that supported peasants in the production of food crops such as shifting cultivation.¹⁴⁵ In the same year, the state passed a Native Development and Welfare (ND&W) Act to provide funds for the improvement of the welfare of the peasants and their production systems in the country.¹⁴⁶ Yet despite the Act's emphasis on soil conservation, the state only discouraged cultivation in the forest reserves.¹⁴⁷ It only hoped to intensify ecological conservation after the end of the war. The Director of Agriculture argued that,

It has not yet been possible to persuade the bulk of the native population to appreciate the outcome of expecting its growing numbers to subsist and improve their lot and dwindling natural resources. There is no denying the fact, however, that despite these efforts soil deterioration is gaining over conservation and that satisfactory methods of arresting it must depend upon properly planned and coordinated effort with a greatly increased staff, which should be available after the war.¹⁴⁸

True to its word, soon after the end of the war in 1946, the state formulated a new agricultural policy to guide interventions among the peasants in the country. The objectives of the policy were to conserve soil, encourage the production of more and better food crops, develop an agricultural cash economy and modernize peasant agriculture.¹⁴⁹ The state implemented the policy by instituting a Maize

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Nyasaland Government, The Native Development and Welfare Act No 14 of 1944, Zomba, 14 October 1944.

¹⁴⁷ Nyasaland Government, Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture for the Year Ending 31 March 1943.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid.

¹⁴⁹ R.W. Kettlewell, "Agrarian Change in Nyasaland, 1945-1960," *Food Institute Studies*, Vol. 5, 1965, p. 239.

Control Board (MCB) and Natural Resources Board (NRB).¹⁵⁰ Largely, the Boards were to influence agricultural production with propaganda on land husbandry, expansion of crop acreage, and early land preparation and planting. The idea here was to ensure that the peasants conducted agricultural production in ways that not only ensured "sufficiency of food and an adequate supply of cash crops for a growing population, but also that the natural resources, on which the country so vitally depends, were not destroyed in the process of increasing production of crops."¹⁵¹ There were also alarmist ecological fears that,

If things are allowed to go on as they are, if people continue to ill-treat their soils which gives them everything they have, if soil is allowed to go on pouring down on rivers, if crops continue to be grown year after year on the same soil, if cattle are allowed to graze grassland bare - then there is no future for Nyasaland. There will be less and less to eat and there will be lower and lower yields for cash crops. The time will come when Nyasaland is bare desert capable of supporting neither human beings nor animals and once this happens nothing on earth could bring it back again.¹⁵²

At best, the state dispatched Agricultural officers into the fields to update peasants about these new agricultural technologies. At the worst, it made harsh orders to enforce compliance with the new agricultural regulations. In 1947, for example, the Provincial Commissioner for the Southern Province stated that,

Every opportunity should be taken to impress upon the NAs, Headmen and cultivators the following primary methods by which agricultural production can be improved: early preparation of gardens, early planting

¹⁵⁰ See, I. Phimister, "Discourse and the Discipline of Historical Context: Conservation and the Ideas about Development in Zimbabwe, 1930-1950," *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 2, 1986, pp. 263-275.

¹⁵¹ Nyasaland Protectorate, Colonial Reports, 1953. This was also cited in Mulwafu, *Conservation Song*, p. 83.

¹⁵² MNA PAM 650 Soil Conservation in Nyasaland, 1947. This was also cited in Mulwafu, *Conservation Song*, p. 83.

and box ridging, manure and compost, seed selection, planting distance and sowing of maize (3 ft), groundnuts (9 inches), inter-planting, weeding and cultivation, food reserve gardens.¹⁵³

However, these attempts were less successful. For instance, most peasants found the use of tractors and chemical fertilizers too expensive especially at a time when the prices of foodstuffs were low. They equally doubted the effectiveness of demonstration gardens as cost of inputs were beyond their reach.¹⁵⁴ Consequently, enforcing compliance with the principles, especially in relation to early land preparation, stream-bank cultivation and patronizing state demonstration gardens established at various agricultural offices, was not a simple task for agricultural officers. Soon after the 1947 statement for early land preparation, the DC for Zomba complained that up to the time the early rains came, the peasants in the district had not prepared gardens. He observed that,

Despite every effort on the part of both Administrative and Agricultural Officers to foster the food production drive for 1947 the results have been most disappointing. Despite everything that was done, the early preparation of gardens was in most areas sadly neglected and the early planting rains for November found a few gardens ready for planting. In Mwambo's area in particular, many, taking advantage of the rain, planted up their old gardens without even attempting to cultivate them.¹⁵⁵

When the DC consulted chiefs and other local farmers in the area on why the people ignored instructions to prepare their gardens early, the peasants complained of the highest temperatures which left the ground especially in the Chilwa basin at its hardest as the reasons for their behaviour. However, the DC downplayed the local ecological knowledge and attributed their behaviour to laziness. He reported

¹⁵³ MNA NSZ 1/2/4 Southern Province reports, 1945 – 1948, Circular 1947.

¹⁵⁴ Int. Witness Kalambula, Farmer, Katanda Village, Zomba, 9.11.2016.

¹⁵⁵ MNA NSZ 4/1.5 Reports 1941-1946.

that, "many therefore prefer to wait for first rains when the work can be done in half the time and soil dug to a greater depth, as the African cultivator is naturally lazy."¹⁵⁶

Later, the state began to blame the chiefs for failing to influence their people to comply with the agricultural policy. For instance, the Zomba DC contended that, except for chiefs Chikowi and Mlumbe, the other chiefs were not good in enforcing the new policy. "Unfortunately, there are few whose lethargic attitude towards life appears to be an incurable disease," argued the DC. "They can only be described as incompetent nonentities and their very existence is a handicap to the administration and advancement of their people."¹⁵⁷ The chiefs responded to the insulting remarks by refraining from attending meetings at DC's office.¹⁵⁸

Subsequently, the state resolved to amend the Maize Control Ordinance at the end of 1947 to allow the MCB to open its own maize farms, adopt the use of hybrid maize and construct food reserves in the rural communities.¹⁵⁹ The state established MCB Farms at Kakoma in Chikwawa, Rivi Rivi and Toleza in Balaka and Kalombi in Salima. From these farms, it produced hybrid maize using mechanized agricultural equipment, and supplied the produced maize to "employers of labour and the MCB may find it necessary to give preference to industries which are not in position to grow their own foodstuffs."¹⁶⁰ This continued up to the outbreak of the 1948/49 famine.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ MNA NSZ 4/1/6, Zomba District Annual Reports, 1947-1961 - Annual Report for Zomba for the Year 1947.

¹⁵⁸ Int. James Matuta, Village Head, Kusokwe Village, Zomba, 13.12.2016. He was 60 when I interviewed him. His father was 30 when this event was happening.

¹⁵⁹ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report of the Department of Agriculture for the Year Ending 31 March 1947.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

The 1948/49 Famine and Large-Scale Interventions, 1948-1960

The outbreak of the 1948/49 famine forced the state to become militant and decisive in implementing the 1946 agricultural and conservation policy. While peasants attributed the famine to the restrictive conservation policies on streambank and shifting cultivation and the absence of market incentives for food crops, the state considered the famine as a by-product of the peasants' unsustainable population growth and poor agricultural methods.¹⁶¹ The population of the country doubled from 1.2 million in 1931 to 2.5 million in 1948.¹⁶² The state argued that this population increase undermined the ability of the peasants to produce sufficient food to cushion them from the crop failure caused by the drought.¹⁶³ Richard Kettlewell, Senior Agricultural Officer, observed that the problem in Nyasaland was "that of too many people multiplying too fast and attempting by traditional and insufficient methods to derive an ever rising level of living from limited amount of land."¹⁶⁴ Such low-level technology of peasant agriculture needed transformation if the country was to avert similar occurrences of famine.

Thus, the state adopted a militant approach to break peasants' conservatism, apathy and laziness, which was alleged to have undermined the efficacy of the policy.¹⁶⁵ The state discounted small-scale and individualized interventions as inappropriate to make a lasting transformation of peasant agriculture. However, it resolved to only target individualized agricultural extension to a handful of peasants

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Nyasaland Protectorate, Reports of Population Census in Nyasaland, 1921-1948.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Kettlewell, "Agrarian Change in Nyasaland, 1945-1960, p. 239.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

who adopted agricultural reforms, while reorganizing the majority of the peasants through wider community projects.¹⁶⁶ The state argued,

A method of mass attack must be found and put into operation quickly. There is no time to start with the intelligent and work slowly outwards. The inherent difficulties by an overcrowded and generally illiterate population, attempting to apply their ageless methods of shifting cultivation with fragmentations of land on a now enforced static existence make this second problem a formidable one. There is no doubt that the solution cannot be found in, nor based on, present African customs and land usage. Wide and sweeping changes of fundamental political and sociological importance will have to take place whatever may be the administrative difficulties.¹⁶⁷

Geoffrey Colby, had, since his appointment as Nyasaland Governor in 1948, expressed fears about the precariousness of over-relying on the peasantry for food supply in the country. He concurred with Richard Kettlewell about the need to make decisive policy interventions as regards the peasantry. Not only would the interventions address the immediate impact of the 1948/49 famine, but also prevent the recurrence of such an event by ensuring that peasant production was undertaken in ways that were ecologically sustainable.¹⁶⁸ To deal with the immediate effects of the famine, Colby provided food relief and intensified the campaign for production of drought resistant crops through a Foodstuff Commission which he appointed in 1948 to coordinate famine alleviation programmes.¹⁶⁹ The production of drought resistant crops was promoted through a food production campaign which the state colloquially called the "Planting Drive."¹⁷⁰ The primary aim of the Drive was to replace the

¹⁶⁶ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report for the Department of Agriculture for Year Ending 31 March 1949.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Nyasaland Protectorate, Famine Commission Report, 1950.

¹⁶⁹ C. Baker, *Development Governor: A Biography of Sir Geoffrey Colby*, London: British Academy Press, 1994, p. 190.

¹⁷⁰ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report for the Department of Agriculture for Year Ending 31 March 1949.

scotched dead maize with drought resistant crops such as sweet potatoes, millet and cassava. The Director also temporarily waived the rules against cultivating along stream-banks and hill slopes in order to give weight to the Drive, as noted in his directive: "Certain breaches of rules on stream-bank cultivation had to be ignored temporarily, in the urgent need to produce more crops."¹⁷¹

After dealing with the famine, Colby began from 1950 to put up formal structures for large-scale interventions as a long-term measure to avoid the recurrence of famine. The process commenced with the promotion of Richard Kettlewell to the position of Director of Agriculture. Kettlewell took over from Garnet who, despite advocating coercive intervention during the famine times, was reluctant to take the requisite practical steps to implement them.¹⁷² By contrast, Kettlewell went down in history as the mastermind of decisive agricultural and conservation policies in the country. Through Kettlewell's leadership, the state implemented large-scale development schemes such as the Domasi community development scheme, the Master Farmers Scheme and irrigation and land use resettlement schemes. As per state policy, conservation was the primary focus of the schemes. T.D. Thomson, who coordinated the Domasi scheme as DC, argued that, "There is no point in teaching people better methods of using their land if its goodness continues to go down the drain. In Nyasaland conditions, it is too late to depend on education, and persuasion and compulsion, accompanied by full explanation, must be applied."¹⁷³

However, promoting conservation with an iron hand was not an easy task for the colonial state in the last decade of its rule. The peasants from Domasi were of the impression that the schemes were initiated to capture and domesticate them into state hegemony, and

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*

therefore, determined to resist every move to interfere with their agricultural practices. Consequently, there was considerable resistance to contour bunding at Domasi throughout the scheme's life span (1949-1955). Thomson, reported that,

Bunding is unpopular. It means a departure from the traditional casual attitude to the future of the land. To a suspicion-ridden people it is obviously a preparation, at their expenses, for their land to be taken over by foreigners. Where pressure on the land is heavy, bunds reduce the planting area by anything from five to fifteen per cent, and the compensating improvement in the soil is not seen for some years. Bunds across paths annoy travellers especially cyclists. On some soil, bunding can cause water logging.¹⁷⁴

The peasants also argued that conservation prohibited practices that helped them to maintain food security by reducing acreage for cultivation and exposing soil to waterlogging and termite attack. Worst still, the peasants resented the state policy of arresting those who did not comply with the agricultural regulations. In some instances, the state uprooted crops that were planted without following the new regulations leaving the peasants with no alternative crops for subsistence. Most importantly, conservation projects took a lot of time, which the peasants needed to devote to food production.¹⁷⁵

Consequently, the existing land shortage in Domasi, did not lead to an immediate rush into Malosa and Chitengere settlement schemes.¹⁷⁶ By 1951, the state had only succeeded to allocate peasants into eight plots. Seven of these were in the hands of people whose origin was outside the communities surrounding Domasi scheme. These settlers consisted of Master Farmers and retired government officers who had reliable alternative incomes with which to sustain

¹⁷⁴ T.D. Thomson, *Domasi Community Development Scheme, 1949-1955*, Zomba: Nyasaland Government Printer, 1955, p. 43.

¹⁷⁵ Int. Ides Mulongoti, Farmer, Thiko Village, Zomba, 9.12.2016.

¹⁷⁶ Thompson, Domasi Scheme.

production.¹⁷⁷ When the state asked one settler in Domasi to put his land holding to rotational agriculture, his response was, "Yes, this idea seems good and may improve my land, but if I have got to rest half of it for a few years to get these results what do I eat in the meantime."¹⁷⁸

As was the case in Southern Rhodesia and Kenya, Master Farmer Scheme farmers who collaborated with the state policy in general engendered more hostilities and conflict with ordinary peasants.¹⁷⁹ The key Master farmers in the Chilwa basin included such chiefs as GVH Njala, Samikwa, Sikamu, Chingondo, Namondwe, Kamoto, and Tawakali as well as ordinary farmers like as Stephenson Kumakanga, Leonard Makhumula, Dominiko Mataika, Moses Mwenya, and Richard Mgwede.¹⁸⁰ However, most of these Master Farmers were ex-migrants and retired civil servants, and members of the Malosa and Likangala settlement schemes who sustained production through their pension funds.¹⁸¹ The majority of peasants accused the Master Farmers of cooperating with the state in promoting conservation and thus, became targets of nationalist protests who capitalized on peasants' grievances in setting their political agenda throughout the 1950s.¹⁸²

But the worst ecological intervention that attracted a great deal of reservation from the peasants was the Maize Production Policy. Formulated in 1952, the policy restricted the production of maize by

¹⁷⁷ Ibid, p. 44.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, p. 46.

¹⁷⁹ See for details, I. Phimister, *An Economic and Social History of Zimbabwe, 1890-1940: Capital Accumulation and Class Struggle*, London: Longman, 1988.

¹⁸⁰ MNA 1 DCZA 3/3/4 Agricultural Reports for Zomba, 1950-1961.

¹⁸¹ Int. Ester Salima, Farmer, Ramusi Village, Zomba, 15.12.2016. This was also captured in O. Kalinga, "The Master Farmers' Scheme in Nyasaland, 1950-1962: A Study of a Failed Attempt to Create a 'Yeoman' Class," *African Affairs*, Vol. 92, No. 368, 1993, p. 372.

¹⁸² MNA 1 DCZA 3/3/4 Agricultural Reports for Zomba, 1950-1961.

denying peasants ready markets for maize produce. In doing this, the state argued that it wanted to deal with ecological problems which were allegedly induced by excessive production of maize in the country.¹⁸³ The state argued that continuous and excessive maize cultivation exhausted soil fertility for sustainable crop production in the country. Earlier in 1951, the Agriculture Director argued that,

It may be comforting to have so much more food, but its production is putting a great strain on the agricultural stability of the more densely settled areas where resting land is already alarmingly short. Moreover, any increase in the area under maize – already disproportionately large – makes the introduction of proper crop rotation still more remote. The object of the field service is to show the African peasant farmers how, by adopting a system of balanced farming, he can produce sufficient food for everyone and the necessary cash crops to provide essential amenities of life, and at the same time how, by adopting the basic principles of good husbandry, he can build up the fertility of his land.¹⁸⁴

Therefore, the state used the new maize policy to limit maize production to areas considered appropriate. Again, it limited the amount of maize reserve to not more than 26,000 metric tonnes per annum.¹⁸⁵ The state could not provide markets in areas which, for reasons of unsuitable soil or topography, were incapable of producing maize efficiently.¹⁸⁶ Rather, it encouraged peasants from these areas to grow alternative crops such as groundnuts and cotton, which were in high demand on the global market.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸³ PCS 1/2/18 Maize Policy June 1952 and September 1959: Policy circular by R.W. Kettlewell dated 10 June 1952.

¹⁸⁴ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report for the Department of Agriculture for Year Ending 31 March 1951.

¹⁸⁵ Policy Circular by R.W. Kettlewell, 10 June 1952.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Memo on Maize Policy by R.W. Kettlewell, 16 September 1952.

However, the formulation of this policy attracted criticism among the colonial officials themselves. The bitter critics included the DC for Mulanje who reminded the Director that such restrictions were among the causes of the 1948/9 famine.¹⁸⁸ Since maize production was core to peasants' rural life, the DC argued that peasants would continue to grow surplus maize despite the policy. This would then force the peasants to use the maize surplus for beer brewing in the district. He said:

These people have been unable to sell their maize. The large stocks held by them will not unnaturally discourage over production of maize this coming year. It will also probably result in beer brewing, absenteeism and crime once beer passes are issued again. I would therefore submit that no undue effort should be made to discourage maize production, particularly as in recent years the slogan has been "grow more food." Such frequent and contradictory changes of policy can only tend to make the average Africans lose more faith in Government and its officers.¹⁸⁹

The Provincial Commissioner for the Southern Province responded by arguing that even though the state wanted the peasants to grow sufficient food crops, there was need to do this in manners that were ecologically sustainable and economically sound.¹⁹⁰ According to him, concentration on maize cultivation was an ecologically unbalanced form of agriculture, and therefore, urged peasants to grow other crops such as beans or groundnuts rather than maize. He argued, "Maize is one of the worst crops for exhausting the soil and should be grown as an economic crop only where it is more suitable for that purpose than any other crop."¹⁹¹

Peasants took advantage of prevailing varied official opinions to resist the interventions. Largely, the peasants responded to the policy

¹⁸⁸ DC of Mulanje's Letter to Provincial Commissioner, 23 September 1952.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid.

¹⁹⁰ Letter of the Provincial Commissioner to the DC of Mulanje, 29 September 1952.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

by refraining from selling maize in state formal markets.¹⁹² This was acute in the 1956/57 season when the state, after incurring huge losses from maize sales at the global market, reduced the price of maize to 2/3 of a penny per pound.¹⁹³ Consequently, the peasants, and surprisingly, the private estates too, resorted to selling their maize to African traders who bought the maize at the former price of 1d per lb.¹⁹⁴ Peasants from Mulanje sold their maize at nearby markets at Chilinga and Muloza on the border with Mozambique.¹⁹⁵

By the end of the 1950s, the Agricultural Department found the maize policy one of the most difficult to implement in the country. In its 1957 annual report, the Department stated that, "The problems of breaking this practice or even making an impression on it is one of the most difficult things facing the Department and one which becomes more intractable year by year as the population increases."¹⁹⁶ With the intensification of nationalism which also drew agenda from peasant grievances, it became difficult for the state to decisively continue with the regulation of maize production. Consequently, from the late 1950s, the state backed down from its zeal to "modernize" peasant agriculture, depressively so, hoping that peasants would instinctively adopt the measures, which had taken a lot of their time, money and attention. The state hoped that, although the policies were relaxed, the peasants would continue to apply its principles on their own. The Agriculture Director reported that, "It's still not possible to foresee the ultimate effects of the new procedure, but experience so far has encouraged the thought that much of the agricultural discipline of the past will be carried forward into the

¹⁹² Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report for the Department of Agriculture for Year Ending 31 March 1955.

¹⁹³ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report for the Department of Agriculture for Year Ending 31 March 1957.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 1957.

¹⁹⁵ Int. Dyson Sukali, Farmer, Tsekakhomo Village, Phalombe, 16.12.2016.

¹⁹⁶ Nyasaland Protectorate, Annual Report for the Department of Agriculture for Year Ending 31 March 1957.

future largely by virtue of unconscious habit."¹⁹⁷ This continued up to the time the country held general elections which saw Africans forming a majority in the colonial government in 1961.

Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to examine the interventions that the state made on peasants' food production in the face of changing ecological conditions from 1891 to 1960. In large measure, it has contended that McCracken's assertion on the varied impacts of colonial capitalism on African ecologies and food security needs to be understood within the broader context of conflicting perceptions of colonial officials about African agriculture and the politics of peasants' resistance. For, despite its merits, state intervention that was conceived and implemented to address what was erroneously thought of as peasants' imprudence, conservatism and reckless agricultural methods only presented the risk of exacerbating food insecurity. Such perception affected the acceptability of state policies among peasants who considered the prevailing food insecurity as a function of colonial exploitative policies on land, labour and food marketing. Throughout the period under study, the peasants failed to appreciate the wisdom of the corrective measures the state advocated which largely promoted conservation at the expense of age-long local practices that adaptively cushioned them from food insecurity in the face of changing ecology and climate. In the face of land scarcity and a rapidly growing population, new conservation practices such as crop rotation and fallowing presented a greater food security risk for the peasants. Given their long experience of adaptation to changing ecologies for food production, peasants were not willing to blindly adopt measures that were a recipe for food insecurity. The peasants received support from some colonial officials who boldly questioned the prudence of the interventions advocated by the colonial state.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

Andrew Ross, John McCracken and Jack Thompson: Three Malawi Historians and their Influence on Scotland-Malawi Relations Today

Kenneth R. Ross

Three near-contemporary Scottish-based historians made Malawi the primary focus of their work, with all three having a special focus on the history of the Scottish Presbyterian missions there. Two of the three, Andrew Ross and Jack Thompson, first became involved with Malawi through working directly for the Presbyterian Missions while the third, John McCracken, became engaged through his doctoral research on the Livingstonia Mission. What at first glance might appear an extraordinary coincidence is, in fact, explained when it is set in the context of the long history of interaction between Scotland and Malawi. Each of the three historians came to be part of this long-running story and each in their own way intertwined the personal and the professional as they became absorbed with Malawi's history in general and with its relationship with Scotland in particular. In their scholarly formation all three were influenced by George Shepperson of Edinburgh University, whose pioneering 1958 book *Independent African* brought Malawi to the centre of attention in African studies just as Ross and McCracken were embarking on their careers.¹ Thompson too grew close to Shepperson in later years and the latter's inspiration is an important factor in explaining the coherence of the work of our subjects. This chapter will briefly outline the careers of the three, compare and contrast their contribution to historical

¹ See George Shepperson and Thomas Price, *Independent African: John Chilembwe and the Origins, Setting and Significance of the Nyasaland Native Rising of 1915*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1958; repr. Blantyre: CLAIM, 2000 (Kachere Monograph No. 13).

understanding and examine the influence that their historical work exercises on Scotland-Malawi relations today.

Andrew Ross (1931-2008)

Andrew Ross was the first of the three to reach Malawi, arriving in 1958 together with his wife Joyce and two young children. A missionary of the Church of Scotland, he was soon immersed in the life of the CCAP – the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian, which had grown out of the work of the Scottish missions in Malawi. With his musical ear he was a natural linguist and developed a love for Chinyanja, which he liked to describe as "the Italian of the Bantu languages" – distinguished for its expressiveness and beauty. His passion to live as closely to the people as possible found ample expression in parish life at Balaka and Ntcheu as well as during spells in Blantyre and Zomba. Andrew grew close to leading Blantyre Synod ministers such as Harry Kambwiri Matecheta, the first to be ordained, then in his old age, Simon Faiti Phiri and Jonathan Sangaya who would soon become his "boss" as the first African General Secretary of Blantyre Synod. He developed a particular affinity with the Ngoni people of Ntcheu and loved to sing their war songs transposed into Christian hymns. A matter of immense pride to Andrew was the honour of being given the clan name "Ngozo" by the Ngoni who adopted him as one of their own.

Following the declaration of the State of Emergency in 1959, Andrew was appointed Chaplain to the Kanjedza Detention Camp in Limbe. He soon discovered that the great majority of the detainees were Presbyterians who had been educated through the Blantyre and Livingstonia Missions. Through his weekly visits Andrew became the confidant of the top leaders of the independence movement in a relationship that was both pastoral and political. When the Malawi Congress Party was formed to spearhead the drive for independence, Andrew was one of its first members, proud of his membership card being No. 6. He was intimately involved in the events that led in due

course to Malawi's independence in 1964. He stood (unsuccessfully) as an independent candidate in support of the MCP in the 1961 elections and, when the MCP came to power, he chaired both the Lands Tribunal and the National Tenders Board.²

Andrew remained close to the young nationalist politicians who in due course formed independent Malawi's first Cabinet. A definitive event not only for Malawi as a nation but for Andrew personally was the "Cabinet crisis" that rocked Malawi soon after independence. There was a profound split between Prime Minister Kamuzu Banda and most of his Cabinet colleagues, notably the gifted younger ministers with whom Andrew was closely associated. As they were scattered into exile Andrew's own position became untenable and he left Malawi in 1965.

Meanwhile he had begun his work as an historian, researching the early history of the Blantyre Mission with which he himself was by now deeply identified. There was global scope to Andrew's scholarship, with North America and East Asia being particular interests. His early experience of the inculturation of Christianity in southern Malawi was a key that helped him to engage with the Jesuit missionaries of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, like Matteo Ricci, who sought to adapt the Christian faith to the cultures of China and Japan. His book *A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits and Japan and China, 1542-1742* has been acclaimed by members of the Jesuit order as a masterly account of a remarkable chapter in Christian missionary history.³ However, for all that his scholarship was wide-ranging and far-reaching, no one could talk to him for long without realizing that Malawi occupied a unique place in his thinking – and in his heart.

² See further Kenneth R. Ross, "Andrew Ross: CCAP Minister, Church Historian and Social Activist," *Religion in Malawi*, No. 15, 2008, pp. 43-45.

³ Andrew C. Ross, *A Vision Betrayed: The Jesuits and Japan and China, 1542-1742*, Maryknoll NY: Orbis, 1994.

As John McCracken observed: "Ross was a thoroughly professional academic who set high standards of scholarship. But, to a degree that set him apart from many of his academic colleagues, he was also a committed activist convinced that the aim of scholarship should be not just to understand the world but to make it a better place."⁴ A particular focus of Ross's concern, since his year as a postgraduate student in New York in 1957-58, was racism. It is no coincidence that his research and writing came to be concentrated on three Scottish missionaries who were distinguished for their opposition to racism: David Livingstone, John Philip and David Clement Scott. His early work on Scott demonstrates the distinctive combination of the personal, the social and the scholarly that imbued his work.⁵ He was thorough and disciplined in his historical research. His doctoral supervisor George Shepperson would expect nothing less. Yet at the same time there was an apologetic quality to his research and writing: he had a case to make. His whole-hearted identification with the cause of Malawian independence had exposed him to criticism that he was guilty of unwarranted politicization of the missionary enterprise. By retrieving the apparently forgotten history of Scott's commitment, during the early years of the Blantyre Mission, to African leadership, to resisting the influence of Cecil Rhodes and the British South Africa Company and to the inculturation of Christianity in the African context, Ross offered an apologia for the stance that he himself had taken in relation to the tumultuous events of the late 1950s and early 1960s when he became active in the Malawi Congress Party drive to attain independence.⁶

⁴ John McCracken, "Andrew Ross and the Radical Strand in Scotland's Missionary Tradition," in Kenneth R. Ross (ed), *Roots and Fruits: Retrieving Scotland's Missionary Story*, Oxford: Regnum, 2014, pp. 84-90, at p. 84.

⁵ Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Blantyre: CLAIM, 1996.

⁶ See further McCracken, "Andrew Ross and the Radical Strand." A full account of Ross's perspective on this defining period of political history can be

John McCracken (1938-2017)

When Malawi became independent on 6 July 1964 there was another young Scot who was present at the stadium in Blantyre for the ceremony. This was John McCracken, recently arrived in the country and pursuing his doctoral research on the early period of the Livingstonia Mission. Probably no one would have guessed that the young newly-arrived Scotsman looking on so intently as the British flag was lowered would later become the most authoritative interpreter of the seventy years of British rule in Malawi. His approach to colonial history had already been shaped during his undergraduate years at Cambridge by the teaching of Ronald Robinson and Jack Gallagher and their new approach to imperial history that took seriously the experience of the colonized as well as of the colonizer. Thus equipped, John embarked on his postgraduate research and, following a year of intensive archival research, he took up the offer of a teaching post at the fledgling University College of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in Salisbury (now Harare). This appointment not only allowed John to cut his teeth in University teaching but plunged him into African political realities. The forces of African nationalism were rising in Rhodesia and being met by the implacable resistance of the white settler Government of Ian Smith. It was not a situation that easily allowed for neutrality and John soon knew which side he was on. In fact, he was arrested in Rhodesia in 1964, after taking part in a peaceful protest against the closure of the only newspaper sympathetic to African nationalism. He was detained for only a few hours but his colours were nailed to the mast. Though in his historical work he would always strive for objectivity and impartiality, his close understanding of the African nationalist cause opened up perspectives that had hitherto been closed to European imperial historians.

found in his posthumously published book, Andrew C. Ross, *Colonialism to Cabinet Crisis: A Political History of Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2009.

John's next move took him to Tanzania where he joined a group of brilliant young historians led by Terry Ranger who were pioneering a radical pro-African understanding of African colonial history. In this period, John was proud to maintain, the cutting edge in the study of African history was found not in any of the prestigious Universities of the UK or USA but at the brand-new University of Dar-es-Salaam. When John returned to Scotland in 1968 it was to another newly-founded University – Stirling, which would be a congenial academic base for the rest of his life. Malawi was never far from his thoughts, though, and when the opportunity came in 1980 to become Professor of History at the University of Malawi's Chancellor College, John jumped at the chance. Together with his wife Juliet and young family he moved to Zomba and took up a three-year appointment that proved to be both fulfilling and formative. With such stimulating colleagues as Kings Phiri, Owen Kalinga and Megan Vaughan and such promising students as Wapu Mulwafu, scholarly collaboration deepened into profound personal friendship that would continue to be productive and inspirational for many years to come.

Meanwhile, John was writing. His early work *Politics and Christianity in Malawi*, based on his doctoral research, remains in print forty years after its first publication - to John's delight, in an affordable Malawian paperback edition.⁷ A constant stream of scholarly articles flowed from his pen, opening up many different aspects of Malawian history. Many of these informed the preparation of his *magnum opus*, which had been conceived while he was teaching at Chancellor College in Zomba in the early 1980s and was finally published in 2012 as *A History of Malawi 1859-1966*.⁸ It quickly came to be regarded as not only the outstanding study of Malawi's colonial history but as among

⁷ John McCracken, *Politics and Christianity in Malawi 1875-1940: The Impact of the Livingstonia Mission in the Northern Province*, 2nd ed., Blantyre: CLAIM, 2000.

⁸ John McCracken, *A History of Malawi 1859-1966*, Woodbridge: James Currey, 2012.

the best single-country histories ever to be written about any African nation. John brought to this task a knowledge of the relevant primary and secondary sources that was unrivalled in its range and depth. He was also an outstandingly numerate historian and many of his points are driven home by reference to statistical data. At the same time, he was a masterly story-teller with an eye for the details and anecdotes which add interest to the narrative.

The book can be read as an economic history since a primary focus throughout is the question of how the country was developing economically or, unfortunately, more frequently, *not* developing economically. In revealing Malawi's inherent economic weakness and the failure of British colonial rule to address it effectively, John relentlessly pursues the question of what the twists and turns of colonial economic policy meant for the average Malawian. In many ways this paints a bleak picture but it also reveals the resilience of Malawian communities for whom economic conditions have been continually unfavourable. It is an authoritative history, deeply grounded in documentary research and statistical analysis yet delivered in wonderfully crisp prose. Scholars, students and general readers have been grateful to have such a comprehensive, gripping and dependable account of a formative period in Malawi's modern history.

His final work, an edition of the papers of the Commission of Inquiry into the 1915 Chilembwe Rising, secures a primary source that will continue to be a priceless resource for scholars in many fields. Though much of John's published work was devoted to Malawi, he maintained the region-wide perspective that had begun with his appointments in Rhodesia and Tanzania in the 1960s. From 1990 to 1992 he served as President of the African Studies Association of the United Kingdom, from whom he later received the award of Distinguished Africanist. His leading role in the Stirling University Centre for Commonwealth Studies brought a still wider perspective to his scholarly work. Yet time and again he returned to

Malawi as his primary focus. Though he never mastered a Malawian language nor became immersed in the vernacular in the way that Andrew Ross did, nonetheless his imagination was gripped by the Malawi story. Though he was never a direct player in Malawian politics or church life, nonetheless his concern for the welfare of the average Malawian was more than an academic interest. No one who was at the Scotland Malawi Partnership AGM in 2011 will forget John's impassioned advocacy of the need to stand up for basic freedoms at a time when authoritarian tendencies in Government had led to violent repression and loss of life. The passion that had led him to demonstrate in Salisbury in 1964 could still be stirred half a century later when the welfare of the average Malawian was at stake.

Jack Thompson (1943-2017)

Jack Thompson was the last of our three historians to reach Malawi, arriving in 1970 together with his wife Phyllis as a missionary of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland to take up a post as a teacher at Livingstonia Secondary School. Thus began an involvement that was to be definitive for Jack's life, both personally and professionally. It concluded on 16 January 2018 when Jack's ashes were interred at Njuyu in Mzimba District, his grave being alongside those of William Koyi and Mawelera Tembo, pioneers of Christianity in northern Malawi with whom he felt a deep affinity. For the Ngoni community that received his ashes and laid them to rest he was not only Jack Thompson but also Jabulani Jere, having been given this clan name by the Paramount Chief M'mbelwa IV, who, as a young man, had been one of Jack's students at Livingstonia in the 1970s. Jack had chosen to be cremated in his full Ngoni regalia and it was clear to all who knew him that Njuyu was his proper resting place.

It was Jack's close involvement with the Ngoni of Mzimba that opened up a field of historical research that was to prove highly fruitful. His doctoral research, begun at the University of Malawi and completed at the University of Edinburgh under the supervision of

Andrew Ross, was centred on Donald Fraser, a Scottish missionary in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries who became deeply involved with the Ngoni. Jack's research revealed the degree to which the Ngoni encounter with the Scottish missionaries was a two-way interaction and the extent to which the success of Fraser's work rested upon his sympathetic appreciation of Ngoni culture. The resultant book was published by E. J. Brill in 1995 as *Christianity in Northern Malawi: Donald Fraser's Missionary Methods and Ngoni Culture*.⁹ Jack would later build on this research with an innovative recognition that there was a third party to the interaction that led to the emergence of the Ngoni church in the late nineteenth century.

Besides the Scottish missionaries and the Ngoni communities there were five Xhosa evangelists, graduates of the Lovedale Institution in the Eastern Cape who had been recruited to strengthen the fledgling Livingstonia Mission. In earlier historiography they tended to be regarded as shadowy figures of little lasting significance. Jack contested this view by vividly describing the role exercised by the five Lovedale men.¹⁰ Their identity was always ambiguous (stranger or brother?) but they were thus able to enter with great sensitivity into the liminal area where traditional life and culture met with Christian conviction and practice. These men had something of a dual identity. On the one hand, they were educated to a high standard and had adapted themselves to European norms. On the other, they had a strong linguistic and cultural affinity with the Ngoni communities among whom they were living and working. In showing that Christian faith was an option for Africans and in intuitively understanding how it might be inculturated, William Koyi in particular laid foundations on which Ngoni Christianity would be built in the years following his tragic death in 1886. The Xhosa

⁹ T. Jack Thompson, *Christianity in Northern Malawi: Donald Fraser's Missionary Methods and Ngoni Culture*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1995.

¹⁰ See T. Jack Thompson, *Touching the Heart: Xhosa Missionaries to Malawi, 1876-1888*, Pretoria: UNISA, 2000.

evangelists were perfectly placed to enable the Scottish missionaries and the Ngoni communities to understand one another. This was recognized by the Ngoni when they gave to Koyi the nickname Mtusane, meaning bridge-builder – a recognition of his role as a cultural and religious mediator whose work was deeply significant for the early Ngoni appropriation of Christian faith. With great sensitivity to the cultural dynamics at play, Jack demonstrated how crucial Koyi's role proved to be in an encounter that would shape Ngoni identity and history in a decisive way.

Jack's pioneering historical research was completed within a network of relationships and friendships that constantly enriched and deepened it. Friendships formed with his students at Livingstonia in the 1970s often proved to be enduring and he continued to expand his circle even after leaving Malawi in 1983 to take up first a lectureship at Selly Oak Colleges in Birmingham and, from 1993, the African Christianity lectureship at Edinburgh University which would be his academic base for the rest of his life. He became in due course the Director of the Centre for the Study of Christianity in the Non-Western World (known today as the Centre for the Study of World Christianity). He was very much an internationalist, fascinated with many different contexts and a scholar of world Christianity. Yet the universal was always viewed through the prism of the particular and, for Jack, the particular context with which he remained absorbed was that of Malawi.

During his Edinburgh years Jack was an ever-present figure in Scotland-Malawi relations. He chaired the Scotland-Malawi Network, formed in 1992 to support the new democratic era in Malawi. Then he was a member of the group convened in 2002 to lay plans for the formation of the Scotland Malawi Partnership, a civil society network to encourage links between the two nations. When it was formally constituted in 2005, he became Vice-Chair of the Board. Time and again the Board turned to Jack for advice, especially in understanding Malawi perspective and Malawi priorities. He was passionate about

the need for this new phase of Scotland Malawi relations to be characterized by mutual respect and genuine partnership. He worked hard to ensure that the Scotland Malawi Partnership would have a counterpart organization in Malawi, which resulted in the Malawi Scotland Partnership coming into being and becoming the innovative and highly effective organization that it is today. He took a leading role in the Higher Education dimension of the Partnership and, in retirement, spent a year as Vice-Chancellor of the University of Livingstonia. In some respects, he took on the bridge-building mantle that he had attributed to William Koyi, always working for mutual respect and mutual understanding. With his base in Edinburgh and his frequent return visits to Malawi he came himself to fulfil the description that he once gave of William Koyi: "... a man who could co-exist in two very different worlds and represent one to the other."¹¹

Scotland, Malawi and an Appeal to History

Ross, McCracken and Thompson have each produced a body of scholarship that will continue to enrich a variety of fields: African studies, mission studies and historical studies among others. The particular point of focus in this chapter, however, is the contribution made by their scholarly work to the reinvigoration of Scotland Malawi relations that has been a feature of the early twenty-first century.¹² A consistent feature of this fresh round of interaction between the two nations has been an appeal to history. This was evident from the first stirrings of a rekindled Malawi connection in Scotland. A significant role was played in the late 1990s and early 2000s by the University of Strathclyde Malawi Millennium Project, itself inspired by the historical memory of David Livingstone being an alumnus of the Anderson Institute, an earlier incarnation of

¹¹ Thompson, *Touching the Heart*, p. 133.

¹² See Kenneth R. Ross, *Malawi and Scotland: Together in the Talking Place since 1859*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013, pp. 197-217.

Strathclyde, and run in partnership with Bell College in Hamilton, the closest higher education institution to Livingstone's birthplace in Blantyre. When Peter West, University Registrar at Strathclyde, was looking to build a wider network of involvement with Malawi he turned to Andrew Ross, whom he had known when they were both at Edinburgh University. Together they agreed that they would seek to forge a new national partnership between the two countries. As Peter West recalls, "Andrew Ross's contacts were vital at this stage."¹³ When West and Ross gave public lectures in Glasgow and Edinburgh respectively, they invoked the historical memory of David Livingstone and the close association between Malawi and Scotland that had arisen from his work and legacy.

It was evident in 2004 that this appeal to history had struck a chord when the Lord Provosts of Glasgow and Edinburgh called together a broad range of civil society actors who were engaged with Malawi from a Scottish base. Their summons invoked the historical memory: "As the Lord Provosts of Glasgow and Edinburgh, we have agreed jointly to launch a campaign to have Scotland commit itself to extending its support for Malawi. The original name of the country, Nyasaland, was given to it by David Livingstone, who is revered there. Over the succeeding 150 years, the force of Scottish opinion has twice saved Malawi. Now it needs further help...."¹⁴ The reference to Malawi twice being "saved" by the force of Scottish opinion can almost certainly be attributed to the influence of the historical analysis of Andrew Ross. Operating as a public intellectual, he had, time and again, drawn attention to the great petitions that expressed Scottish solidarity with Malawi, first when there was imminent danger in 1889-90 that southern Malawi would be annexed

¹³ Peter West, personal communication, 23.02.2018.

¹⁴ "The Scotland/Malawi Partnership: The Warm Heart of Scotland/The Warm Heart of Africa," circular letter from Liz Cameron, Lord Provost of Glasgow, and Lesley Hinds, Lord Provost of Edinburgh, 29 March 2004.

by Portugal, and secondly when Malawi was absorbed into the racist Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland in 1953.¹⁵

The Lord Provosts' call did not fall on deaf ears. A new round of Malawi-oriented networking gained traction across many sectors of national life during the following year. An embryonic networking organization came into being, with a Board being formed and Strathclyde University's recently retired Director of Communications, Margaret Robertson, serving as volunteer executive officer from 2004 to 2006. By the end of 2005 the Governments of both countries were ready to commit to working together. The Cooperation Agreement between Scotland and Malawi sets out the basis on which they would do so. It states that: "Scotland and Malawi have a long history of collaboration, particularly in health and education. Both countries share a wish to build upon this history by actively engaging through partnership. This is a reciprocal partnership based upon sharing experiences and skills. It is an opportunity to learn from each other and to recognize the needs of our two countries."¹⁶ From the outset the mutual commitment was predicated upon an appeal to history.

Meanwhile during 2004-05 a new coordinating body, the Scotland Malawi Partnership, came into being to consolidate the network of civil society engagement between Scotland and Malawi. It presented itself as an innovative initiative but one that grew out of the deep history that connected the two nations. It stated its identity and vision in these terms: "It pioneers a new approach to North-South relations, one built on friendship and respect between two nations built up over

¹⁵ Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, pp. 85-104.

¹⁶ Cooperation Agreement between Scotland and Malawi, November 2005, "Malawi after Gleneagles: A Commission for Africa Case Study," Report of the Scotland-Malawi Partnership Conference, November 2005, pp. 5-6, see www.scotland-malawipartnership.org – my italics.

generations of close collaboration."¹⁷ Again the appeal to history was explicit.

So, it has continued. Humza Yousaf, Scottish Government Minister for Europe and International Development (2011-16), customarily invoked this historical memory: "Scotland has a long and proud shared history with Malawi which we know harks back to the days of Dr David Livingstone's travels to Malawi over 150 years ago."¹⁸ Parliamentary debates on Malawi were peppered by references to Livingstone and the long history that connected the two nations. The Global Goals Partnership Agreement signed between Malawi and Scotland in April 2018 states in its first sentence that the two parties are, "desirous to sustain the remarkable network of connections between the two countries built upon by each successive generation for over a century and a half..."¹⁹ Abundant evidence makes it plain that this fresh round of Malawi-Scotland interaction has been consciously inspired by what went before.

The research that made Ross, McCracken and Thompson deeply aware of the long-running ties between Scotland and Malawi, and their active advocacy of the place of this relationship in the lives of both nations, proved to be a resource that inspired a fresh round of engagement in the new conditions of the early twenty-first century. The appeal to history was a significant motivational factor in mobilizing the activism that prompted both Government and civil society to re-energize the Scotland-Malawi relationship. Furthermore,

¹⁷ Peter A. West and Kenneth R. Ross, "Foreword," *Scotland Malawi Partnership Strategic Plan 2008-11*, Edinburgh: Scotland Malawi Partnership, 2008, p. 3.

¹⁸ Humza Yousaf, "Foreword," in Kenneth R. Ross, *Malawi, Scotland and a Relational Approach to International Development*, Edinburgh: Scotland Malawi Partnership, 2015, p. 4.

¹⁹ Global Goals Partnership Agreement between the Republic of Malawi and Scotland, <https://beta.gov.scot/publications/global-goals-partnership-agreement-between-scotland-and-malawi>, [31.07.2018], p. 1.

their work would also be significant in shaping the contours of the renewed relations.

Mutual Respect

One of the core values of the new phase of Scotland-Malawi relations that has developed in the early twenty-first century is the spirit of partnership and mutual respect. This was evident at the 2005 "Malawi After Gleneagles" Conference, which set the tone for the coming years. Among the speakers at the conference was Malawian economist Matthews Chikaonda who cited the traditional proverb, "no one can shave your head in your absence."²⁰ The point was that effective development would depend on the presence and participation of Malawians at all levels of planning and implementation. This challenge has been taken to heart. A distinctive feature of the Scotland Malawi Partnership, suggested educationalist Dixie Maluwa Banda, is that, "they have always challenged us [Malawians] to set the agenda."²¹

Compared with much conventional practice in international development this appeared to be an original and innovative approach. It struck a chord, however, partly because of the significant historical work that had been done to demonstrate that, even in the colonial period, African leadership and African initiative played a decisive role. This was a matter with which Andrew Ross was much concerned in his study of the early period of the Blantyre Mission.²² He recounts how David Clement Scott, from the moment of his arrival in 1881, had developed a close working relationship with African leaders who had been drawn to the Mission in its early years, such as Joseph Bismarck, Rondau Kaferanjira and Donald Malota. This took more formal shape in 1893 with the establishment of a

²⁰ "Malawi After Gleneagles: A Commission for Africa Case Study," Report of the Scotland Malawi Partnership Conference, November 2005, p. 104.

²¹ Dixie Maluwa Banda, personal communication, 10.01.2014.

²² See Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, pp. 143-63.

class to train deacons, African church leaders, with an enrolment of seven. To these deacons Scott was ready to entrust significant responsibility, such as the appointment of Harry Kambwiri Matecheta to lead the new mission station established at Panthumbi in Ntcheu in 1893. Already at this early stage the leadership of the emerging African church at local level was very largely in African hands. Ross notes the consternation with which this was viewed in the European community but observes that Scott forged ahead regardless.

John McCracken likewise drew attention to the vital role played by Africans drawn to Livingstonia Mission during its early days: "Unjustly ignored in official histories of the mission, the contribution made many members of this group in the pioneer years was undoubtedly of considerable importance."²³ Jack Thompson too was alert to the reality that, even under colonial rule, African communities and individuals were not bereft of agency and initiative. He observed that "... groups such as the Ngoni ought not to be regarded by historians merely as helpless objects tossed about on a sea of colonial policy-making, but rather, to some extent at least, as interest groups able to exercise political skill in trying to control the situation to achieve their own particular strategic ends."²⁴ His extensive study of the work of Donald Fraser in Mzimba from 1896 to 1925 led him to the conclusion that, "... the genuinely African church which was created in Mzimba district in the first twenty-five years of the twentieth century, was made possible precisely because Fraser was willing to listen to his Ngoni colleagues rather than imposing an entirely European form of Christianity on them."²⁵

²³ McCracken, *Politics and Christianity*, p. 80.

²⁴ Jack Thompson, *Ngoni, Xhosa and Scot*, Zomba: Kachere, 2007, pp. 137-38.

²⁵ Thompson, *Ngoni, Xhosa and Scot*, p. 75.

A highly characteristic article by Thompson is entitled "Speaking for Ourselves: the African Writers of Livingstonia."²⁶ Here he surveys the literature published by Africans educated at the Livingstonia Mission during the first half of the 20th century. His conclusion is that, "They wanted simply to be able to speak for themselves. That they were able to do so with such eloquence and persuasiveness is a tribute, not only to the education they received at Livingstonia, but also to their own character, intelligence and determination."²⁷ As Brian Stanley remarks, "In his writing and teaching Jack was consistently anxious to ensure that African voices were both heard and respected."²⁸ It is this note of respect that is strongly evident in the renewed interaction of Scotland and Malawi in the early twenty-first century. The emphasis on African agency found in the work of all three of our historians has played at least some part in shaping an approach to partnership working that is marked by respect for Malawian leadership and expectation of Malawian initiative.

The Priority of the Relational

Another influential feature of the historical scholarship of Ross, McCracken and Thompson is their attention to the relational dimension, to the friendships formed between Malawians and Scots at a personal level. This was evident from an early stage. At a time when the prevailing racist ethos discouraged any close interaction between Europeans and "natives," at Blantyre Mission David Clement Scott made it his practice to hold a tea-party in his own home every Saturday for senior students at the school. As Andrew Ross observed: "These were meant to be relaxed friendly occasions

²⁶ Jack Thompson, "Speaking for Ourselves: the African Writers of Livingstonia," *Bulletin of the Scottish Institute of Missionary Studies*, New Series 10 (1994), pp. 24-35; also published in *Ngoni, Xhosa and Scot*, pp. 154-67.

²⁷ "Speaking for Ourselves," p. 167.

²⁸ Brian Stanley, "In Memoriam: Dr T. Jack Thompson (1943-2017)," *Studies in World Christianity*, Vol. 24, No. 1, 2018, pp. 82-84 [p. 83].

which Scott hoped to use in a twofold way. First, he taught the young folk how to behave easily in European company, secondly, he got a chance to have them talk and to learn from them not only customs and traditions of African life, but also their ideas and feelings about what was going on around them."²⁹

Though Malawians were frequently frustrated by paternalistic and colonialist attitudes among the Scots, this did not prevent close friendships being formed, even under colonial conditions. Amongst innumerable friendships between Malawians and Scots few are more moving than that between Jonathan Chirwa and Donald Fraser.³⁰ Chirwa was one of the first Africans to be ordained to the ministry in the Livingstonia Mission. He confessed to adultery and resigned from the ministry. When years had passed and his repentance was evident, Fraser was prepared to challenge senior colleagues to make the case for his friend to be restored to the ministry. In the end he prevailed and the two worked together on many occasions. Finally, they were buried side by side at Loudon Mission in Embangweni. The scene was evoked by Jack Thompson: "Here, under a mixture of Scots pines and African indigenous trees, Fraser and Chirwa lie side by side – symbolizing both their friendship, and the mixed nature of the church (both African and Scottish) which they, and many others like them, helped to create amongst the Ngoni."³¹ This poignant image points to something of far-reaching significance. "When all is said and done," concluded Thompson, "Fraser's most important contributions might be thought to be simply in the friendships and relationships which he made with many Malawians, such as Daniel

²⁹ Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, p. 75.

³⁰ See Thompson, *Ngoni, Xhosa and Scot*, pp. 90-92.

³¹ Jack Thompson, "Remembering the Past, Celebrating the Present: the Centenary of Loudon Mission, November 2002," *The Society of Malawi Journal*, Vol. 56, No. 1, 2002, pp. 24-32 [30].

Nhlane, Jonathan Chirwa and Clements Kadalié."³² The same could be said of Scots and Malawians in later generations.

After analyzing the involvement of Scottish missionaries in the 1959 state of emergency and subsequent drive for independence, John McCracken concludes that, "At a personal level the most remarkable feature of the period was the extent to which friendships forged between black and white Christians during the years of the emergency remained unbroken by the political disturbances that followed. Activist missionaries whose lives had been disrupted by the cabinet crisis ... retained an active involvement with Malawi that reached fruition in the early 1990s, when several of them were able to return."³³ One of those who experienced such friendship is the literary scholar David Rubadiri, who comments on what it has meant:

Malawi is very much a Scottish country because of the early presence of the Scots Mission here ... Malawi is a Scotsman's country. The friends that we knew and lived with are people who, though they've retired back in Scotland, are people who are in spirit with us here ... When you have lived and experienced at a spiritual and human level, human issues and problems being asked and answered, those you've experienced all those questions and answers with never leave! So, though I know they are in Scotland, each time I move around Malawi, I feel them around ... because they are part and parcel of a great experience.³⁴

This spirit of friendship endures and to a great extent has been the driving force behind the reinvigoration of Scotland Malawi relations during the early years of the twenty-first century. A concentration of personal friendships between two countries can drive a friendship at national level. Andrew Ross was fond of quoting a young journalist

³² Thompson, *Ngoni, Xhosa and Scot*, p. 88.

³³ John McCracken, "Missionaries and Nationalists: Scotland and the 1959 State of Emergency in Malawi," in Afe Adogame and Andrew Lawrence (eds), *Africa in Scotland and Scotland in Africa: Historical Legacies and Contemporary Hybridities*, Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2014, pp. 42-73, at pp. 69-70.

³⁴ David Rubadiri, cit. Billy Kay, *The Scottish World: A Journey into the Scottish Diaspora*, Edinburgh and London: Mainstream, 2006, p. 205.

in Southern Rhodesia who stated at the time of the Federation, "When we complain, who listens? When you Nyasas complain, Scotland complains as well."³⁵ It is this sense of common cause between Scotland and Malawi that has found renewed expression in meeting contemporary challenges.

A distinctive feature of the Scotland-Malawi engagement is that it is a people-to-people model of development, rooted in the shared history between the two nations. The particular genius of this approach is its grounding in the friendship—both individual and institutional—which has built up between the two nations over the past 150 years.³⁶ It focuses on active relationships between people to foster a shared understanding of the development challenges facing Malawi and to support the creation of practical, sustainable solutions. A Chatham House study observes that: "Senior UK diplomatic officials have pointed to the focus on relationship-building as a factor which makes Scotland's involvement with Malawi stand out from that of other donors."³⁷ It is through their sense of kinship and their shared human experience that the people of Scotland and Malawi aim to effect real and lasting change, both through their own activity and by influencing the policies and actions of governments and institutions.

Though the language of friendship and "auld alliance" is often used by politicians and diplomats to characterize the relationship of two countries, it is rare that this is so deeply grounded in the genuine

³⁵ Andrew C. Ross, "Scotland and Malawi 1859-1964," in Stewart J. Brown and George Newlands (eds), *Scottish Christianity in the Modern World*, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 2000, pp. 283-309, [283].

³⁶ See further Kenneth R. Ross, *Friendship with a Purpose: Malawi and Scotland for Sustainable Development*, Edinburgh: Scotland Malawi Partnership, 2018.

³⁷ Adjoa Anyimadu, *Scotland and Wales in Africa: Opportunities for a Coordinated UK Approach to Development*, Africa Programme Paper: AFP PP 2011/02, London: Chatham House, 2011, p. 16.

affection and practical activism of ordinary citizens. The Scotland Malawi Partnership and the Malawi Scotland Partnership, as civil society alliances, do not seek to operate as large, centrally funded aid operations. Rather, they both function by uniting the great variety of organizations and individuals that operate bilaterally between the two nations - by coming alongside in a spirit of mutual respect, forming friendships and working together practically and purposefully. The work of our three historians has revealed the extent to which this experience of life-enriching friendship has characterized the interaction of the two nations across a century and more. Capturing this distinctive ethos, built up over generations, has, in turn, helped to define the innovative collaboration between Scotland and Malawi that has become a remarkable feature of the international development landscape in the early twenty-first century.

Countering Racism and Advancing Social Justice

One reason for the friendships formed between Scots and Malawians being so deep and enduring is that they have had a unifying purpose. Scotland's interaction with Malawi began at a time when racist ideology was approaching its high noon; and grew during the colonial era with all the cultural alienation and economic exploitation that it involved. The pro-African orientation of many of the Scots who became involved with Malawi did not exempt them from complicity in the colonialism of their times. As Jack Thompson commented on the Livingstonia Mission: "The whole enterprise was based on the premise (generally accepted by Europeans a century ago) that European culture and technology were clearly superior to African and that Africans must learn the European way if they were to succeed. There was not nearly enough attention given to the question of how the strengths of African society and culture might be used to build a better country and a better Christianity."³⁸

³⁸ Thompson, *Ngoni, Xhosa and Scot*, p. 102.

Nonetheless, despite blind spots and shortcomings, the Scotland-Malawi axis has on the whole been directed to counter racism and to be a force for social justice. The reason that David Livingstone came to Malawi in the first place was, as Andrew Ross explains, to "... seek a suitable base from which Christianity, civilization and commerce could play their role in transforming Africa without the violence, injustice and slavery which he believed had characterized the meeting of European and African heretofore."³⁹ He was thoroughly disillusioned with the racist ideology that would lead eventually to apartheid in South Africa and white supremacy in Rhodesia. Under his influence the relations of the races were set on a very different footing in Malawi.

This became apparent in the 1890s when the long-established Blantyre Mission constantly clashed with the recently arrived British administration, which was all too susceptible to the influence of Cecil Rhodes and the British South Africa Company. This was an influence that the Blantyre Mission under David Clement Scott was determined to resist. As British Consul Sir Harry Johnston wrote to Rhodes, "I don't think you have ever realized the bitter hatred borne you by these Scotch missionaries of Blantyre."⁴⁰ The reason for the sharp difference was differing views on race and on the future direction of southern African societies. Andrew Ross grasped the nub of the issue when he stated: "... the critical position of the mission in regard to the Administration was based on fundamental differences over principle. The issue of principle was twofold: first was the African of the day capable of becoming a responsible and civilized individual,

³⁹ Andrew C. Ross, *David Livingstone: Mission and Empire*, London and New York: Hambledon and London, 2002, p. 77.

⁴⁰ Johnston to Rhodes, 7 June 1893, Salisbury Rhodesia Archives CT/1/16/4/1; cit. Ross, *Blantyre Mission*, p. 115.

and secondly, was African culture capable of becoming the foundation of modern development."⁴¹

The same fundamental difference resurfaced in 1953 at what would prove to be the denouement of Malawi's colonial history when, despite the near-unanimous opposition of its entire African population, Britain imposed the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland on Malawi. To the great majority of Malawians this was an act of betrayal. Nyasaland had been a "Protectorate" but now it was handed over to precisely the kind of racist regime from which it wished to be protected. Again Andrew Ross offers a succinct summary of the issues at stake: "It was a clash between white supremacy and the paramountcy of native interests; a clash between no skilled jobs for 'natives' in the south and African engine-drivers and telephonists in Nyasaland, between Sangala hopefully pressing for an African majority in Legco [the Legislative Council] in Nyasaland and Huggins asserting that the native must be ruled by 'a benevolent aristocracy'."⁴² It was this perspective that again set the Scottish missions at odds with the British Government. As John McCracken has observed: "... it was the special achievement of Scottish missionaries attached to the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) that, for a brief period, they won the support of the great majority of the members of the socially conservative Church of Scotland to a policy diametrically opposed to that of the British Government."⁴³ The anti-Federation stance taken by the 1959

⁴¹ Andrew C. Ross, "The African – 'A Child or a Man?' - The Quarrel between the Blantyre Mission of the Church of Scotland and the British Central Africa Administration, 1890-1905," in Eric Stokes and Richard Brown (eds), *The Zambesian Past: Studies in Central African History*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1966, pp. 332-51 [351].

⁴² Andrew C. Ross, *Colonialism to Cabinet Crisis: A Political History of Malawi*, Zomba: Kachere, 2009, p. 58.

⁴³ John McCracken, "Church and State in Malawi: The Role of the Scottish Presbyterian Missions 1875-1965," in Holger Bernt Hansen and Michael

Church of Scotland General Assembly is generally regarded as having proved decisive in changing British Government policy and paving the way for Malawi's independence a few years later. Our three historians have each played a notable part in demonstrating how the Malawi-Scotland axis functioned to counter racism and seek social justice, particularly during the decisive time of the State of Emergency in 1959-60.⁴⁴

The values enshrined in the Scotland-Malawi story and elaborated in the historical work of Ross, McCracken and Thompson have provided an inspiring counter-narrative in the context of the revived racism and xenophobia prevailing in the early years of the twenty-first century. Scots and Malawians have reaffirmed their solidarity, their determination to uphold human dignity, their insistence on mutual respect and their commitment to combating poverty. Together they seek to take a lead in implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.⁴⁵ They are united by a shared, and historically grounded, quest for social justice and human well-being. One factor underpinning this anti-racist and socially progressive activism is the historical work on Scotland-Malawi relations that has been completed over the past half century. As John McCracken commented on the work of Andrew Ross:

Many academic historians see publication primarily as a means of enhancing their careers. Ross, by contrast, looked to the past to uncover examples of individual Scots whose struggles against racism and injustice could inspire those committed to similar campaigns in the present. The life stories of John Philip, for 30 years the highly

Twaddle (eds), *Christian Missionaries and the State in the Third World*, Oxford: James Currey and Athens: Ohio University Press, 2002, pp. 176-93, at p. 182.

⁴⁴ Kings M. Phiri, John McCracken and Wapulumuka O. Mulwafu (eds), *Malawi in Crisis: The 1959/60 Nyasaland State of Emergency and its Legacy*, Zomba: Kachere, 2012, especially pp. 128-35, 165-91.

⁴⁵ www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/sustainable-development-goals, [6.04.2018].

controversial champion of African rights in South Africa, of David Livingstone, the great explorer and of David Clement Scott the visionary leader of the Blantyre Mission, differed in many respects. But in his three major African-focused monographs Ross demonstrates the common commitment of his subjects to the creation of non-racist, just societies.⁴⁶

That same commitment is evident in the work of McCracken himself and of Thompson. Without compromising the academic rigour required in their discipline, these three historians have produced a body of work that has helped to shape a contemporary movement to counter racism and advance social justice.

Conclusion

This chapter has considered three Scottish-based academic historians who made Malawi the primary focus of their research. It has found that, on the basis of their scholarly research, they functioned as "public intellectuals," stimulating and shaping a significant mobilization of organizations and individuals committed to working between Scotland and Malawi to the mutual benefit of both nations. Each brought a distinctive contribution. At the risk of simplification, you might turn to McCracken for economic analysis, to Ross for political analysis and to Thompson for cultural analysis. Together they created a corpus of work that had a particular focus on the role of the Scottish Presbyterian missions and on the distinctive relationship between Malawi and Scotland that resulted from their work. This opened up fertile ground from which a fresh round of interaction and collaboration could grow during the first two decades of the 21st century. As well as doing the scholarly spadework they were also champions and advocates of the Scotland-Malawi relationship. Ross and Thompson were frontline activists while McCracken provided counsel and made judicious interventions at

⁴⁶ McCracken, "Andrew Ross and the Radical Strand," p. 86.

decisive moments. Both through their direct involvement and through the influence of their scholarly work these three historians have exercised a significant influence on Scotland-Malawi relations in the early twenty-first century.

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Index of proper names

A

Abenguni Revival Group, 378
Acharya, 271, 476
Achewa Providence Industrial
Mission, 354
African Affairs, 25, 45, 47, 58, 60, 61,
62, 63, 116, 218, 224, 292, 311,
408, 426, 440, 472, 473, 476, 478,
482, 484, 486, 488, 493, 494, 495,
499, 503
African Independent Churches, 104,
109, 114, 349, 353, 356
African Lakes Company, 122, 210, 402
African Methodist Episcopal Church,
308
African National Church, 301
African Reformed Presbyterian
Church, 301
African Studies Association of the
United Kingdom, 22, 32, 45, 451
African Traditional Religions, 329, 335,
336
African Welfare Association, 235
Afrikaner, 174-75
Agape, 306, 364
Agbiji, 318, 476
Aggrey, James Emman Kwegyir, 187
Agriculture Department, 126, 128,
131, 136, 425, 427, 428, 429, 431
Agriculture Director, 425, 426, 428,
441, 443
Alesi, 188
All African Trade Union Federation,
239

Allman, Jean, 171, 177, 181, 191, 192,
227, 476, 485
Amazon Army, 227
Ambali, Augustine, 97, 476
Anderson, Allan, 349, 356
Anderson, David, 46, 65, 66, 348, 398,
401, 419, 426,
Anderson Institute, 455
Anderson-Morshead, A.E.M., 97
Anglican, 97, 101, 110, 164, 294, 302,
304, 306, 307, 308, 316, 478, 489,
505
Anglo-Boer War (1899-1902), 175
Anti-Witchcraft Act (1911), 351
Apostolic Faith Mission, 107, 306,
356, 357, 361
Apple, Michael W., 323, 339, 477
Archives, 44, 46, 70, 186, 213, 466
Asia, 346, 447
Asian, 52, 204, 207, 208, 234, 237,
404, 407, 476, 482, 503
Assemblies of God, 256, 306, 357,
359, 491
Association of Nyasaland African
Motor Transport Workers, 236
Atchona churches, 355

B

Babou, Cheikh Anta Mback, 219, 477
Badassy, Prinisha, 176, 477
Baker, Colin, 70, 78, 119, 122, 216,
223, 276, 309, 311, 312, 373, 437,
477
Balaka, 435, 446
Banda, Dixie Maluwa, 459

- Banda, Hastings Kamuzu, 11, 22, 32, 35, 43, 69, 73, 75-76, 83-84, 89-91, 108, 142, 191, 215, 225-26, 229-33, 238-40, 250-52, 254, 259, 270-71, 276-77, 278-81, 283, 284, 287-88, 303-04, 308, 312, 328, 347, 367, 368, 370, 372, 374, 391, 393-94, 447, 471, 474, 478, 481, 491, 496, 504, 508
- Banda, Joyce, 312
- Banda, Kelvin, 326
- Banda, Khetwayo, 111
- Banda, Macleard, 109-10
- Banda, Martin, 307
- Banda, Oswald Jimmy, 110
- Banda, Paul Chiudza, 5, 9, 29, 384
- Banda, Rachel, 108
- Bandawe, 87, 93, 96, 478
- Bandawe, Lewis Mataka, 96
- Bangwe, 367, 411
- Bantu, 145, 213, 446
- Baptist, 9, 107, 108, 294, 308, 354, 478
- Battle of Adwa, 354
- Baza Dokowe, Chief, 379
- Beinart, William, 48, 61, 67, 419, 420, 474, 478, 494
- beni*, 414
- Berman, Bruce J., 10, 275, 479
- Bible, 12, 29, 38, 108, 141, 142, 143, 148, 149, 153, 154, 158, 159, 167, 175, 179, 187, 248, 321, 329, 330, 332, 334, 335, 336, 341, 363, 369, 478
- Bible Faith Ministries, 369
- Bible Knowledge, 175, 179, 321, 329, 330, 332, 335, 336, 341
- Bickford-Smith, Vivien, 399, 401, 409, 479
- Bilima, Jaspine, 105, 479
- Bill of Rights, 240
- Bismarck, Joseph, 68, 94-95, 459, 479
- Black Man's Church of God, 301
- Blantyre, 11-13, 19-20, 23, 28, 30, 49, 53, 60, 62, 67-68, 75, 79, 87-88, 92, 94-96, 100, 102-03, 105-06, 108, 110-14, 119-21, 124, 135, 138-43, 145, 147, 149, 151-52, 154-56, 159-60, 164-65, 167, 173-74, 184-85, 187, 189, 194, 196, 199, 225-26, 228, 235-37, 293, 296, 300, 302-03, 306, 313-14, 337, 350, 357-60, 364-70, 373-74, 382, 387-89, 391, 393-94, 396-97, 399-400, 402-18, 445-50, 456-57, 459, 461-62, 466-67, 469, 471-72, 478, 480-81, 484, 486, 489-93, 495, 499-502, 504, 506
- Board of Theological Studies, 106
- Bomba, Gideon, 359
- Bonk, Jonathan, 317, 479
- Booth, Joseph, 95, 103, 107, 300, 354, 484, 490
- Boquito, Tom, 68, 94
- Born-Again, 347, 357, 360, 507
- Branch, Thomas, 94
- Brand, Dona, 186
- Brennan, James R., 399, 479
- Brill, 102, 108, 257, 293, 297, 407, 453, 463, 473, 474, 482, 487, 494, 501, 505
- Britain (see also UK), 41-48, 54-55, 79, 91, 119, 124-25, 164, 171-74, 182, 186, 218, 254, 276-77, 280, 467, 487, 489
- British Central Africa (BCA) company, 121
- British Consul, 421, 466
- British Cotton Growers Association, 125
- British Institute in Eastern Africa, 26, 396, 480
- British Protectorate, 116, 121
- British South African Company, 124
- Brody, Paula Rae, 231, 232

Bulambya, 243, 245, 247, 248, 255,
257, 260
Burton, Andrew, 396, 399, 401, 404,
409, 411, 412, 413, 479, 480, 488
Bushiri, Prophet, 314, 316, 363
Butchart, Alexander, 78
Bwaila, 127

C

Cabinet Crisis, 38, 216, 240, 263, 276,
280-81, 303, 373, 449, 467, 477,
489, 502
Calvary Family Church, 306, 361, 362,
364
Cambridge, 9-10, 14, 18-19, 23, 31-32,
34, 41-42, 46, 49, 52, 66, 77, 92,
100-01, 118, 138, 143, 165, 208,
217, 219-20, 272, 274-75, 293,
296-97, 299, 399, 404, 414, 419-
20, 449, 471, 474, 479-80, 482,
485, 487, 493-95, 497, 504, 507-08
Cameron, Colin, 71,
Cameron, Liz, 456
Cape Coast, 413
Cape Maclear, 95, 144, 202, 497
Cape Town, 91, 104, 182, 196, 198,
244, 250, 399, 471, 481
Cape Town University, 104, 250
Capricorns, 223
Carr, David, 341, 342, 480
Cashgate, 309, 311, 317
Castle, Barbara, 279
Catholic, 95, 97, 101, 113, 251, 294,
297, 302, 303, 304, 306, 307, 308,
310, 312, 315, 316, 349, 360, 497
CCAM, 231, 232
CCAP (Church of Central Africa
Presbyterian), 19, 95, 97, 101, 108-
10, 114, 140, 165-66, 186, 248,
303, 332, 359-60, 366, 412, 446-
47, 467, 479-81, 488, 497, 502, 509
Central African Company, 367

Central African Federation, 72, 81,
227, 238, 277, 505
Central Province Native Association,
205, 207
Central Region, 46, 101
Centre of Commonwealth Studies, 22,
45, 471
Certificates of Claim, 119, 121
Chakanza, Joseph C., 104, 293, 299,
301, 327, 347, 354-55, 364, 480
Chamber of Commerce, 154
Chancellor College, 9, 11, 13-14, 21,
32, 34-35, 42-43, 46, 48, 67, 71-72,
78, 101, 103, 106, 109, 111, 113-
14, 188, 333, 400, 450, 488, 496-
97, 499-500, 502, 507
Chanock, Martin, 208, 210-11, 213,
480
Chaponda, Willie, 362, 365
Charismatic Movement, 111, 298,
351, 358, 362, 370, 497
Charismatic Redeemed Renewal
Ministries International, 360
Charismatics, 294, 316, 346, 349, 357
Chazan, Naomi, 274, 481
Chewa, 14, 79, 80, 101, 104, 163, 166,
187, 194-95, 203, 211, 281, 302,
315, 350-51, 372, 384, 491, 500,
505-06
Chibambo, Rose, 70, 227-28
Chichewa, 95, 142, 162, 167, 176,
232, 483
Chichiri, 368, 404, 406, 411, 414
Chichiri Secondary School, 368
Chidester, David, 327, 328, 342, 481
Chidziwitso cha pa Umache, 170
Chigamba, Nellie, 352
Chigwirizano, 104
Chihana, Chakufwa, 238, 239, 240
Chikala, 120, 133-34
Chikala Hills, 120
Chikaonda, Matthews, 459
Chikowi, 435

Chikuse, Chief, 188
 Chikuse, Willebes, 167
 Chikwewu, 134
 Chilambya, 245
Chilangizo, 186
 Chilembwe, John, 24, 31, 34, 38, 43, 49, 51, 71, 82, 90-91, 99, 101, 103, 107, 138-39, 168, 300-01, 313, 316-17, 328, 354, 375, 445, 451, 471, 492, 495, 500, 504
 Chilima, Saulos, 391
 Chilobwe, 360
 Chilomoni, 367
 Chimambwe, 245
 Chimang'anja, 144, 146, 148-49, 153, 156, 158-59
 Chimwankhunda, 360
chinamwali, 185, 187
 Chinamwanga, 245
 Chingonde, 245
 Chingoni, 202, 203, 378, 490
 Chingota, Felix, 313, 481
 Chinkwita, Emmanuel, 359
 Chinongo, 251
 Chinsapo, 348
 Chinula, Charles, 301, 302
 Chinunkha, 247, 254, 256, 260
 Chinunkha Marsh, 256
 Chinyama, Philipo, 354
 Chinyanja, 138, 141, 142, 154, 158, 159, 167, 176, 184, 202, 446
 Chinyika, 245
 Chipembere, Henry Masauko, 5, 11, 38, 215, 276, 280-81, 293, 304
 Chipeta, Mapopa O.J., 233-36, 481
 Chiponda, Anne F., 215, 228
 Chiradzulu, 121, 236, 354
 Chirambo, Reuben, 372
 Chiromo, 124
 Chirwa, Jonathan, 462
 Chirwa, Orton, 61, 256
 Chirwa, Vera, 61, 70, 227-28
 Chirwa, Wiseman Chijere, 63-64, 66, 121, 229, 233, 393
 Chisambiro, Wilson, 359
 Chizaso, Wakisa, 363
 Chisiza, Dunduzu, 256
 Chisuse, Mungo Murray, 39, 68, 94, 156, 472, 494
 Chitengere, 439
 Chitipa, 47, 103, 110, 243, 245, 255, 261, 264, 488, 497
 Chitumbuka, 202, 203, 245, 394, 489
 Chiume, Kanyama, 61, 215, 256
 Chiwaliwali, 228, 229
 Chiyao, 141
 Cholo (Thyolo), 235
 Chombo, Kamzati, 359
 Christ's Ambassadors, 363
 Christian Council of Malawi, 306, 307
 Christian Native Marriage Ordinance (1912), 183
 Christian Service Committee, 306, 307, 309, 478, 496
 Christianity, 3, 5, 7, 13, 22-23, 26, 28, 32, 34, 49, 58-59, 75-77, 79, 81-83, 85, 87, 92-93, 98, 100-02, 111-12, 138, 140, 143, 160, 163-64, 166, 170-72, 185-86, 189-90, 194, 199, 201, 243, 245, 249-51, 255-56, 293, 296, 298-300, 303, 305, 310, 314-16, 319-20, 324, 327-30, 336, 339-41, 343-45, 349-51, 356, 362, 364, 370, 402, 419, 447-48, 450, 452-54, 460-61, 464-66, 471, 475-76, 482-83, 485, 495, 497, 502, 504-05, 507-09
 Christiansen, Robert E., 266, 268-71, 482
 Chuma, 68
 Church of Christ, 104, 150, 308, 354
 Church of Scotland, 13, 19, 42, 93, 100, 114, 140, 146, 164, 199, 258, 446, 467, 502-03
 Clough, Juliet, 21

Clough, Monica, 21
 Colby, Geoffrey, 223-24, 237-38, 437-38, 477, 482
 Colonial and Development Welfare Fund, 417
 Colonial Office, 90, 122, 218, 277, 428, 499
 Colonial Secretary, 24
 Commercial and General Workers Union, 237, 238
 Commercial Workers Union, 240
 Commonwealth Relations Office, 280
 Congo, 84, 105, 398, 402, 408
 Cooper, Frederick, 84, 117-19, 221, 237, 274, 404, 482, 487
 Coquery-Vidrovitch, Catherine, 396, 398, 401, 407, 482
 Cornelius Fellowship, 365
 Currey, James, 31

D

Dar-es-Salaam, 9, 10, 20, 31, 35, 42, 43, 59, 77, 98, 99, 107, 399, 413, 450, 479, 480, 490
 Darwin, Charles, 219, 220, 482
 David Gordon Memorial Hospital, 85
 Davy, E.W., 424
 Democratic Progressive Party, 311, 312, 384, 391, 392
 Distinguished Africanist, 22, 45, 451
 District Commissioner, 183, 212, 256, 261
 Domasi, 144, 151, 152, 330, 331, 336, 438, 439, 496, 505
 Domingo, Charles, 299, 354
 Doune, 22, 55
 Dowa, 46, 187
 DRCM (Dutch Reformed Church Mission), 5, 163-66, 173-75, 179-83, 186-87, 189
 Durban, 329, 399, 413

Durkheim, Emile, 346
 Dutch Reformed Church, 14, 163, 165, 166, 167, 297, 490, 499, 501
 Dyos, H.J., 397, 504
 Dzimbiri, Lewis, 233, 239-40, 483

E

Eastern Cape, 453
 Edinburgh, 7, 13, 17-18, 22, 26-27, 41, 48, 51, 54, 63, 70, 80, 82, 91-94, 96, 99-100, 102, 114, 116, 139-40, 142, 146-47, 152, 156, 160-61, 198, 266, 268, 299, 420, 445, 452, 454, 456, 458, 463-64, 471, 474-75, 478, 482-83, 486, 489-90, 494-495, 501-04
 Eklesia *Lanangwa*, 301
 Ekwendeni, 87, 253, 257
 Elmslie, W.A., 96, 483
 Emirbayer, Mustafa, 197, 483
 England, 38, 41, 87, 338, 486
 English, 95, 142, 148, 149, 153, 156, 158, 159, 160, 161, 170, 212, 318, 360, 497
 Englund, Harri, 5, 9, 27, 28, 138, 162, 348, 394, 483, 489
 Enlightened Christian Gathering, 363
 Episcopal Conference, 306, 307, 332, 333
 Ethiopia, 354, 398
 Europe, 100, 128, 218, 226, 239, 298, 302, 315, 458, 501
 European, 19, 35, 51-52, 63, 78, 81, 129, 136, 141, 143, 147-51, 154, 157, 160-61, 170-71, 181, 191, 193, 195-97, 200, 204-05, 207-11, 213, 218-19, 234, 248, 299, 323, 345, 354-55, 384, 404, 407, 409-10, 449, 453, 460, 462, 465-66, 490, 498

Evangelical, 12, 94, 97, 103, 106-07,
109, 111, 114, 294, 305, 308, 316,
357-58, 364, 369, 488, 508
Evans, Peter B., 272, 504
Every Home Crusade, 358

F

Fair, Laura, 415
Faith of God Ministries, 369
Falola, Toyin, 398, 412, 484, 503
Farmers Marketing Board, 282, 287
Federal Intelligence Security Bureau,
257
Federation, 220, 224, 230, 248, 252,
254, 296, 301, 302, 303, 457, 464,
467
Federation of West Africa, 220
Ferguson, Niall, 219, 220, 483
Ferreira, Ana, 342, 483
Ferreira, M., 185
Fiedler, Klaus, 3-4, 7, 9, 23, 28, 92,
103, 305, 347, 349, 353, 356, 358,
364, 368
Fiedler, Rachel NyaGondwe, 109, 111,
113-14
First World War, 132, 168, 172, 173,
176, 298
Fisher, Nigel, 281
Flint, John, 218, 484
Food Production and Control
Committee, 130
Forster, Peter G., 59, 102, 484
Fort Hill, 247, 252, 256
Foucault, Michel, 78, 320-21, 324-25,
477, 484
Fraser, Agnes, 94
Fraser, Donald, 95, 102, 201, 293, 299,
379, 453, 460, 462, 484, 505
Free Methodists, 107
Freund, Bill, 401-02, 404-05, 484-85
Friedson, Steven, 79-80
Fullan, Michael, 343, 485

Furahaani, M., 95

G

Gabriel, Andrew, 359, 366, 367, 368
Gadama, Richard G., 110, 305, 364-65,
485
Gaitskell, Deborah, 174
Gallagher, Jack, 18, 41, 449
Gama, Harry Sam, 363-69
Gelfand, Michael, 76
Geneva, 181, 429
Gengenbach, Heidi, 192, 201, 209,
485
German Association of Protestant
Missions and Churches, 106
Ghana, 177, 225, 398
Gifford, Paul, 348, 485, 507
Glad Tidings Church, 306
Glaser, Clive, 220, 413, 485
Glasgow, 11, 69, 70, 308, 456, 491
Gomani, Chief, 389, 390
Gonapamuhanya Cultural Festival,
392
Gondwe, Daniel, 88
Good, Charles, 68, 80
Gramsci, Antonio, 323, 324, 486
Great Depression, 234, 275
Greek, 53, 142, 146, 153, 158
Green, Erik, 268, 428
Gumbula, Chifundo, 389-90
Gudu, Wilfred, 104, 293, 301, 312,
480
Guinea, 220, 221, 227, 503

H

Hafstein, Valdimar, 374-75, 486
Hara, Handwell, 96
Hastings, Adrian, 23, 115
Hebrew, 142, 145, 146, 153
Henga, 50

Hetherwick, Alexander, 68, 95, 138-42, 144, 146-49, 154-61, 167, 196, 198, 486, 491-92
 Hiebert, Paul G., 350, 487
 Hill, C. de N., 278
 Hinsley, Harry, 18
 HIV/Aids, 77, 80
 Hodgkin, Thomas, 219, 487
 Hodgson, A.G.O., 187
 Hofmeyr, A.L., 97, 110,
 Hofmeyr, Johannes Wyland, 305, 364-365, 485, 487
 Hokkanen, Markku, 4, 9, 27-28, 59, 75, 81, 83-88, 91
 Holiness Revival, 363
 Hooper, Cicely, 172
 Hora Mountain, 379
 Hornby, A.J., 425, 487
 Horton, Robin, 101, 102
 House of Commons, 135, 281
 Hughes, Rebecca, 171-72, 487
 Humphrey, David H., 271, 288, 487
 Hynde, R.S., 151

I

Ibadan, 412, 413, 484, 486
 Ifumbo, 245-47, 254, 256, 258-60
 Iliffe, John, 20, 31, 36, 44, 66, 77-78, 98, 414, 487
 Ilondo, 246
 Indian Ocean, 38, 277
indingali, 254
Ingoma dance, 378
InhlangoYab'Ondhlayo, 170, 176
 Intoxicating Liquor Ordinance, 128-29, 422
 Iringa, 20
 Isoko, 247
 Italian, 39, 67-68, 446, 472, 494
 Itumba, 247

J

Jackson, Bill, 245-46, 250, 254, 257
 Jackson, P.W., 325
 Jackson, Robert, 340, 488, 490
 Jawali, George, 66
 Jeffrey, Greselder, 311
 Jehovah's Witnesses, 298, 309, 314, 368, 484
 Johannesburg, 96, 363, 399, 413, 416, 489
 Johnson, W.P., 95
 Johnston, Sir Harry H., 64, 86, 119, 122, 125, 152, 297, 421, 466, 488
jole, 414
 Joshua, T.B. (Temitope Balogun), 294, 315, 317
Journal of African History, 39, 52, 58, 60, 62, 64-65, 67-68, 117, 119, 135, 182, 297, 396-97, 409, 411, 419-20, 428, 472-73, 480, 486, 493-94, 499, 505-07
Journal of Southern African Studies, 25, 39, 42-46, 58, 60-64, 66, 71-72, 78, 82, 116, 118-119, 139, 233, 262, 277, 296, 312, 406, 419-20, 433, 471-73, 478, 481, 488, 491-92, 494-495, 497, 499-500, 506, 508

K

Kachapila, Hendrina, 5, 10, 28, 163, 187, 194, 195, 198, 223, 228-29, 488
 Kachere, 11, 23, 25, 47-48, 75, 92-94, 96-97, 99-108, 110, 112, 173, 194, 199, 215, 293, 300, 302-04, 306, 308, 327, 345, 356, 360, 368, 386, 445, 449, 460, 467-68, 471, 473, 478, 480, 484, 489-93, 495, 497-98, 500-05, 507
 Kachingwe, J., 282

Kachingwe, Laston, 282-83, 364, 366-69
 Kadalie, Clements, 463
 Kadewere, Simon, 354
 Kadogana, Frank, 110, 488
 Kadzamira, Mama Cecilia Tamanda, 232
 Kadzamira, Zimani, 36
 Kaferanjira, Rondau, 459
Kalilole, 167
 Kalilombe, Patrick, 304
 Kalinga, Owen J., 21, 46-47, 62, 191, 215, 220, 440, 450, 488-89
 Kambalazaza, Mark, 360
 Kameme, Chief, 243, 245
 Kamisa, Beckson, 261
 Kamnkhwani, Hellemann, 105, 489
 Kampala, 98, 307, 478
 Kamwana, Elliot, 104, 293, 299, 354, 480
 Kamwendo, Gregory, 394
 Kanjedza, 359, 366-68, 390, 412, 446
 Kanjeri, Muyata, 256
 Kapeni, Chief, 407
 Karonga, 5, 47, 87, 110, 223, 228, 243-44, 251, 256-57, 261-62, 488-89
 Kaseye, 256, 260
 Kaspin, Deborah, 281, 373, 489
 Kasungu, 182, 230
 Kaunda, Jonathan, 269-70
 Kaunda, Stefano, 88
 Kawinga, Chief, 132
 Kayambazinthu, Edrinne, 203, 378, 489, 491
 Kayange, Kapanyalibeyu, 249
 Kayange, Sunda, 260
 Kayira, Gift, 29
 Kayira, Legson, 96
 Kelso, 18
 Kenya, 10, 32, 65, 205, 216, 221, 275, 330, 398, 407-09, 411, 440, 476, 479, 487, 498, 500, 505
 Kenyan, 32, 71

Keswick Convention, 358
 Kettlewell, Richard W., 281, 432, 436-38, 441, 490
 Khanda, 127
 Khondowe, 84, 202, 245
 Kimambo, Isariah, 43, 44, 98, 490
 Kimberly, 401
 Kimu, Chief, 135
 King, Truby, 176, 182, 483
 King's Own Scottish Borderers, 18
 Kings African Rifles, 298
 Kinshasa, 408, 485
 Kjekshus, Helge, 66, 419
 Kliebard, H.M., 325, 490
 Kololo, 138
 Kongwe, 165, 185
 Koyi, William, 452-53, 455
 Krasner, Stephen D., 272
 Kufa, John Gray, 68
 Kufa Road, Zomba, 55
Kumadona, 166, 179-82
 Kumtumanje, Chief, 135
 Kumwembe, Margret, 232
Kwa Amai, 163, 169-70, 175-88
kwela, 415
 Kydd, Jonathan, 266, 268-71, 288, 490

L

Labuschagne, A.S., 95, 490
 Lake Chilwa, 52, 492
 Lake Malawi, 52, 80
 Lake Nyasa, 52-53
 Land Ordinance (Native Location) (1904), 122
 Landreth, Gordon, 261
 Lands Tribunal, 447
 Lane, Stewart, 364
 Langworthy, Harry, 95, 103, 490
 Last Church of God and His Christ, 354
 Latin America, 117, 346, 487, 507

- Laws, Robert, 75-76, 83, 85-87, 94, 100, 153-54, 161, 174, 196, 201, 351, 408, 478, 490-91
- Lawton, Denis, 339, 490
- League of Malawi Youth, 222, 223
- Legislative Council, 136, 141, 154, 248, 467
- Lembe, 249
- Leuven, 106
- Life and Work*, 94, 110, 142, 167, 489
- Life and Work in British Central Africa*, 142
- Lihoma, Paul, 46
- Likoma, 167, 312
- Lilongwe, 12, 46, 93, 167, 184, 224, 226, 230, 235, 247, 277-78, 280, 282, 286, 297, 304, 313-14, 332, 336, 348-49, 351-52, 360-61, 363, 366-69, 373-74, 388-90, 399-400, 427, 482, 491-92, 496, 503
- Limbe, 267, 359, 400, 402-08, 410-11, 415, 418, 446, 500
- Linden, Ian, 93, 101, 112, 302, 304, 310, 315, 491, 508
- Linden, Jane, 101
- Living Waters, 306, 361, 362, 364
- Livingstone, David, 38, 50, 75, 86, 93, 164, 296, 297, 319, 448, 455, 456, 458, 466, 469, 501, 502
- Livingstonia, 13, 19, 23, 34, 42, 49, 57-58, 61, 75-76, 84-90, 92, 94-95, 100, 111, 113, 138, 153, 161, 164, 167, 173-74, 189, 196, 198-99, 201-02, 213, 244-45, 248, 253, 257, 259, 301, 303, 345, 354, 370, 382, 445-46, 449-50, 452-55, 460-62, 465, 471-75, 481, 484, 490-92, 495-96, 501, 506
- Livingstonia Mission, 13, 23, 34, 42, 49, 57, 61, 75-76, 87, 92, 100, 138, 153, 164-65, 167, 174, 201, 213, 248, 253, 259, 301, 345, 370, 382, 445, 449-50, 453, 460-62, 465, 471, 474, 495, 501
- Livingstonia News*, 167
- Livulezi, 165
- Lomwe, 121, 373, 382-89, 427, 508
- London, 7, 12-14, 27, 58-59, 65, 69-70, 75, 78, 84, 93-97, 100-01, 119, 123, 125, 135, 155, 174, 177, 191, 201, 215-16, 218, 223, 227, 275-77, 279-80, 288-89, 291, 298, 300, 302, 306, 318, 320-25, 327-28, 339, 341, 343, 345, 355, 373, 377, 397, 404, 419, 437, 440, 463-64, 466, 471, 474-77, 479, 481-93, 495-96, 498-99, 501-08
- London Missionary Society, 93
- Lonrho Group, 367
- Lonsdale, John, 4, 10, 20, 27, 31, 44, 57, 276, 479
- Loudon Mission, 379, 462, 506
- Lovedale Institution, 453
- Lower Shire, 46, 117, 297, 428
- Lubani, Lali, 60, 416
- Lusaka, 20, 101
- Lusaka, Mwayi, 6, 11, 29, 49, 372, 491
- Lwanda, John L. Chipembere, 5, 11, 27-28, 69, 80, 82, 293, 303, 307, 312, 491
- Lyttelton, Oliver, 23

M

- Mackay, Peter, 68
- Mackenzie, D.R.96
- Macmillan, Harold, 218
- Macmillan publishers, 84, 142, 177, 325, 331, 429, 482-83, 490, 497, 503
- Macvicar, Neil, 87
- Madagascar, 172, 295, 501
- Magomero, 93, 297, 373-74, 508
- Maize Control Board, 433

Makanjira, 401
 Makata, Lawrence, 60, 68, 416
 Makerere, 9, 98, 107, 500
 358, 359, 360, 361, 362, 363, 365,
 Malawi After Gleneagles Conference,
 459
 Malawi Congress Party, 61, 223, 250,
 262, 267, 303, 375, 391-92, 446,
 448
 Malawi Council of Churches, 332, 334
 Malawi Law Commission, 351
 Malawi Law Society, 308
 Malawi National Archives, 19, 46, 236,
 425
 Malawi Young Pioneers, 222
 Malekebu, Daniel, 90, 96
 Malemia, Chief, 135
 Malosa, 439, 440
 Malota, Donald, 68, 459
 Mandala, Elias, 64, 295, 297
 Mandala House, 402
 Mandala, Ruth, 6, 11, 30, 396
 Mang'anja, 138, 140, 142, 144, 146,
 148-49, 157-58, 202, 383, 503
 Mangwalala, Chief, 365
 Mapanje, Jack, 32
 Marriage Ordinance (1902), 183
 Martin, Jack, 94, 173
 Martin, Mamie, 92-93, 173, 185, 504
 Marxist, 37, 60, 143, 346
 Maseko Ngoni Heritage Association,
 377, 389
 Matecheta, Harry Kambwiri, 95, 138,
 446, 460, 492
 Matinga, Charles, 236
 Matoga, Geoffrey, 362, 364, 369
 Matuta, James, 126, 435
 Mau Mau, 65, 71, 472-73, 494
 Maxon, Robert, 57
 Maylam, Paul, 405-07, 409, 492
 Maxwell, Lloyd, 260
 Mbelwa, Chief, 100, 377, 379, 382
 Mbereshi, 172, 186, 187
 Mbewe, Madalitso, 362, 364
 McCalls, James, 424
 McCulloch, M. 97
 McMullen, M.M.M., 280
 McNamara, Robert, 288
 Melrose, 18
 Messac, Luke, 82
 Mfungwe, Makewell, 261
mganda, 414
 Mhone, Guy C.Z., 119, 266-67, 269-70,
 495-96
 Migdal, Joel, 216-17, 274-75, 495
 Ministry of Community Services, 231,
 232
 Ministry of Education, 322, 330-31,
 335-36, 338, 341-43, 496
 Mische, Ann, 197, 483
 Misuku, 46, 245-47, 249, 251-52, 255-
 57, 259-60
 Misuku Coffee Cooperative, 251-52
 Misuku Hills, 46, 246
 Mitchell, Gordon, 327, 328, 342, 481,
 496
 Mitchell, Timothy, 272-273,
 Mjojo, B.K.M., 400, 496
 Mkandawire, Austin, 70
 Mkandawire, Yafet, 301
 Mkumba, 383
 Mkunga, 359
 Mlanda, 165, 182, 185, 188
 Mlanga, Margaret, 227
 Mlumbe, Chief, 435
 Moir, Frederick, 210
 Mombera Native Association, 204-05,
 207-08, 211-12, 235, 374
 Morris, Brian, 66, 67, 79, 80
 Morton, Kathryn, 277, 284, 496
 Moscow, 239
 Mothercraft, 5, 163, 170, 176, 179-80,
 483
 Mothibe, T.H., 416, 496
 Moyo, Fulata, 351

Mozambique, 9, 121, 166, 192, 201,
 209, 277, 350, 383-84, 443, 485
 Mpingwe African Compound, 407
 Mputa, Chief, 188
 Msiska, Suzgo, 238-39
 Msumba, Jordan, 354
 Msundwei, 349
Mtenga Watu, 167
Mthenga, 5, 163-64, 167-69, 176-83,
 185-86, 188-89
 Mubula, 256
 Mughese Catholic Mission, 251
 Mulanje, 39, 120-21, 151, 235, 355,
 365-66, 383, 386, 426, 428, 442-43
 Mulenda, 247
 Mulhako wa Alhomwe Heritage
 Association, 377, 382-83, 388
 Mulunguzi, 127
 Muluzi, Bakili, 309-11, 384
 Mulwafu, Wapulumka O., 3-4, 8, 11,
 17, 25, 27-28, 46-48, 56, 65-67,
 119, 299, 420, 425, 433, 450, 468,
 471, 473, 489, 497, 500
 Mumba, Levi Ziliro, 61, 213, 236, 301
 Munyenyenbe, Rhodian, 109, 113-14,
 298, 305, 315-16, 351, 362-64, 497
 Murphy, Philip, 65, 72
 Murray, L. J., 184
 Murray, Martha, 166, 179
 Murray, W.H., 167, 179, 211
 Muslim, 308, 310, 322, 327, 328, 333
 Musopole, Augustine, 29
 Musopole, Katoba Flax, 47, 54, 60-61,
 243, 244-45, 250, 253-55, 257,
 260-65 472, 493, 495
 Musopole, Kenani, 243, 253
 Musopole, Mwachipeta Mkwali, 243
 Musopole, Tupokiwe, 244, 256, 259
 Musopole, Yoram, 243-45, 254, 257,
 265
 Musopole, Zakaliya, 243
 Mustard Seed Fellowship, 365

Mutharika, Bingu wa, 312, 382-83,
 387
 Mutharika, Peter, 311, 391
 Mvera, 105, 165, 166, 179, 198, 199,
 489
 Mwale, Ismael, 167
 Mwambo, Chief, 135, 434
 Mwambungu, Nelson, 256
 Mwamlima, Maxwell, 258
 Mwase, George Simeon, 61
 Mwasi, Edward, 96
 Mwasi, Yesaya Zerenji, 301
 Mwenilondo School, 244
 Mwiba, Abner, 256, 260
 Myers, Garth, 399
 Mzimba, 205, 212, 223, 374, 377-80,
 389, 452, 460
 Mzimba Heritage Association, 375,
 377-80
 Mzuzu, 3, 9, 12, 59, 89, 95-96, 100,
 103, 106, 109-11, 113-14, 247,
 298, 313-14, 353-54, 357-58, 363,
 374, 377-80, 455, 478, 480-81,
 484, 486, 488-89, 491, 496-98,
 502, 504-05
 Mzuzu University, 9, 12, 59, 95, 103,
 106, 109-11, 113-14, 358, 478,
 481, 488-89, 496-98, 505

N

Nacala, 135, 277-78, 281-82, 287
 Nachitipa Lodge, 264
 Naisi, 127
 Namagagula, 188
 Namibia, 398, 476
 Namiwawa, 127
 Namlangeni, 188
 NaMuyota, 249
 Naotcha, 360
 Naperi, 368, 404, 406, 414
 Napier, Robert, 167
 National Archives of Malawi, 70

National Commission on Women in Development, 231
 National Library of Scotland, 19
 National Statistical Office, 366
 National Tenders Board, 447
 Nationalist Party, 250, 252
 Native Associations, 204, 235, 374
 Native Civil Servants Association, 235
 Native Development and Welfare Act (1940), 403
 Native Food Stuffs (Amendment) Ordinance (1920), 117, 135
 Native Foodstuffs Ordinance, 128-29, 421
 Native Land Settlement Policy, 119
 Natural Resources Board, 433
 Ndali, 253
Ndebele, 377, 497
 Ndirande Welfare Club, 415
 Ndombo, Chief, 155
 Ndonga, 243, 244
 Ndovie, Stanley S., 361-62, 364
 Ndundu, Blair, 256
 Neocharismatic, 6, 28, 112, 345, 348-49, 353, 355-58, 360, 362-64, 369-70, 498
 Neocharismatics, 345, 347, 350-52, 357-58, 498
 New Life for All, 358, 364
 New Testament, 154, 158, 167, 245, 261, 349
 New Testament Assembly of God, 349
 New York, 12, 93, 95, 97, 118, 143, 170, 192, 216, 219-20, 225, 271, 280, 282-83, 297, 300, 317, 322, 323, 325, 331, 361, 398-99, 404, 421, 429, 448, 466, 477-80, 482-85, 487-91, 497-98, 502-04, 507-08
 Ngerenge, 247, 257
 Ngoni, 50, 96, 100, 102, 166, 188, 200, 201-03, 293, 373, 377-82, 389-92, 413, 446, 452-53, 460-63, 465, 483-84, 496, 501, 505
 Nhlane, Daniel, 463
 Nigeria, 294, 363, 398
 Njilima, Duncan, 68
 Njuyu, 452
 Nkata, Yoram, 88
 Nkhata Bay, 50, 53, 228, 256, 354
 Nkhoma, 12, 29, 95, 101, 104-05, 110-11, 113-14, 165-66, 182, 184-86, 194, 310, 358, 419, 479, 481, 489, 492, 498-99, 509
 Nkhoma, Bryson, 4, 6, 29, 66, 116
 Nkhoma Mission, 101
 Nkhoma University, 110, 113
 Nkhotakota, 228, 401
 Nkolokoti, 367
 Nkrumah, Kwame, 225, 244, 309, 498
 Nkula, 282
 NORAD, 46
 Nordlinger, Eric A., 272, 498
 North Nyasa Native Association, 235, 374
 Northern Province, 23, 34, 49, 58, 75-76, 92, 101, 130, 138, 165, 205, 212, 223, 257, 345, 422, 450, 471, 495
 Nseula, Nellie, 232
 Ntaba, Mary, 359
 Ntandire, 313
 Ntcheu, 183, 354, 389, 391, 446, 460
 Ntenda, 227
 Nthalire, 103, 245, 497
 Ntimawanzako, Nacho, 156
 Ntondo, 223
 Nyamba, 134
 NyaGondwe, Dorothy Tijepani, 256
 Nyanja, 140, 142, 144, 154-55, 158-59, 163, 202, 486, 501
 Nyasaland African Congress, 61, 238, 245, 251, 254-55, 375, 407, 417
 Nyasaland Employers (Motor Transport and Traders) Association, 236

Nyasaland Employment of Native
Labour Regulations, 123
Nyasaland Times, 123-24, 127, 130-32
Nyau, 194-95, 488
Nyerere, 274
Nyika, 6, 12, 28, 39, 66, 112, 345, 472,
494, 498
Nyika plateau, 66
Nyondo, Chief, 243

O

Ochieng, William Robert, 216, 221,
498
Office of President and Cabinet, 231
Official Hostess, 232
Ogot, Bethwell A., 57, 216, 221, 498
Onyina, Opoku, 353
OPC, 231-32, 290
Operation Jambo, 229
Ophunzira a Gabrieli, 367
Osei-Hwedie, Bertha, 388-89, 498
Overseas Development
Administration, 277
Overtoun Institution, 87, 90, 245
Oxford, 25, 31, 34, 43, 48-49, 67, 76-
77, 89, 104, 139, 170, 172, 205,
276, 281, 295, 300, 321, 355, 377,
397-398, 409, 413, 419, 426, 448,
468, 471, 473-74, 477, 480, 484,
486, 490, 493-95, 500-01, 503,
507-08

P

Palmer, Robin, 59, 62, 65, 135, 295,
480, 499, 506
Parsons, Janet, 59, 65, 135, 165-67,
175, 295, 480, 499, 506
Pastoral Letter, 307-08
Pauw, C. Martin, 101, 499
Pearce, Robert, 122, 218, 499
Pearson, D.S., 286-87, 289

Pennant, T., 400, 499
Pentecostal, 28, 107, 114, 294, 305-
06, 316, 345-49, 353, 355-58, 361,
363-64, 366-370, 483-84, 504-05,
507
Pentecostalism, 28, 306, 346-49, 355-
57, 359, 361, 364, 476, 491-92,
496, 504, 506-07
Pentecostals, 109, 294, 306, 316, 346,
349, 356-57, 361
Phalombe, 39, 366, 386, 443
Phelps-Stokes Commission, 322, 328,
491
Philip, John, 448, 468
Phiri, D.D., 500
Phiri, George, 257
Phiri, George Oupa, 364, 366-68, 369,
Phiri, Isabel Apawo, 104, 108, 194-95,
198,
Phiri, Kings M., 3, 4, 7, 9, 12, 21, 25,
27, 36, 41, 43, 47-48, 103, 215,
229, 386, 399-400, 450, 468, 471,
473, 481, 489, 499-500
Phiri, Simon Faiti, 446
Pirouet, Louise, 98, 500
Pithie, Elizabeth, 68, 196-98, 471, 493
Polytechnic, 365, 369
Pondamali, 349
Portugal, 457
Power, Joey, 62, 67, 76, 78, 222, 237,
400, 500-01,
Presbyterian, 13, 29, 70, 84, 88, 90,
96, 101, 104-05, 108-11, 140, 144,
152, 194, 247-48, 301-02, 308,
315-16, 360, 362, 445-46, 452,
467, 469, 474, 480-81, 489, 492-
93, 497-99
Presbyterianism, 35, 104, 187, 194,
199, 201, 500
Press Holdings Limited, 369
Prevost, Elizabeth, 172, 501

Price, Thomas, 31, 51, 82, 99, 101,
139, 144, 159, 299-300, 445, 501,
504
Protectorate, 78, 90, 119, 121, 123-
31, 134-36, 141, 150, 152, 207,
234, 421-22, 427-29, 431, 433,
435-37, 441, 443, 467
Protestant, 84-85, 90, 106, 162, 247-
48, 297, 310, 315-16, 349
Providence Industrial Mission, 90,
104, 107, 300, 308, 354, 491-92
Provincial Commissioner, 183, 187,
205-06, 212, 430, 433, 442
Public Affairs Committee, 308, 487
Public Works Department, 123, 236
Purkis, Jane, 19
Purpel, David E., 332, 501

Q

Queen Elizabeth Hospital, 404
Quelimane, 402

R

Raats, Dona, 179, 180, 182, 186
Railways and Recreation Association,
235
Ranger, Terence O., 20, 31, 36, 43-44,
47-48, 57-58, 70-71, 77, 99, 171,
306, 450, 471-72, 475, 487, 493,
495, 500
Rathbone, Richard, 398, 401, 477
Rebmann, Johannes, 144, 498
Registrar of Trade Unions, 239
Reijnaerts, Hubert, 102, 302, 501
Religion and Culture, 104, 115
Religion in Malawi, 80, 305-06, 327,
330, 343, 347, 356, 480, 484, 496,
505
Religious and Moral Education, 321-
22, 326, 330-31, 333-36, 341, 496,
503

Religious and Moral Studies, 332, 341
Rennick, Agnes, 80-81, 85
Restoration International Christian
Centre, 363
Rhodes, Cecil, 64, 70, 94, 152, 448,
466
Rhodesia, 19, 31, 35, 42-43, 47, 64,
69, 90, 123, 139, 178, 186, 195,
224, 238, 252, 254, 276, 295, 303,
402, 407-08, 440, 449, 451, 457,
464, 466-67, 486
Ricci, Matteo, 447
Richardson, A.S., 431
Riddel, Alexander, 144
Rijpma, Sjoerd, 297, 501
Roberts, Andrew, 31, 474, 493
Robertson, Margaret, 457
Robinson, Ronald, 18, 31, 41, 449
Robinson, S., 176, 483
Rodney, Walter, 44, 99, 408, 501
Roman Catholic, 255, 302, 304, 360,
412, 493
Rome, 20, 93, 102, 507
Rose, Wallace, 424
Ross, Andrew C., 6, 30, 70, 100-01,
111, 138, 293, 296, 302-03, 445-47,
452-53, 456, 459, 461, 466-68,
473, 502
Ross, Kenneth R., 2- 4, 6, 8, 13, 17-18,
24, 30, 72, 102-03, 106, 112, 114,
140, 199, 293, 303, 308, 310-311,
320, 333, 368, 386, 445, 447-48,
445, 455, 458, 464, 473, 480-81,
484, 493, 500, 502-03, 507
Rotberg, Robert I., 59, 215, 219, 300-
01, 503
Rubadiri, David, 463
Rueschemeyer, Dietrich, 272, 504
Rumphi, 50
Rutenganio, 261

S

- Salanjira, Macloud F., 5, 13, 28, 320,
 326, 329, 337-38, 343, 503-04
 Salima, 165, 185, 435, 440
 Salisbury, 31, 35, 416, 449, 452, 466
 Salm, Steven J., 398, 412, 484, 503
 Sande, Jonathan, 167
 Sandys, Duncan, 281
 Sangala, James, 236
 Sangaya, Jonathan, 446
 Shaw, Mabel, 171-72, 186-87, 190,
 504
 Schmidt, Elizabeth, 220, 227, 503
 Schneider, Leander, 274, 503
 School of Oriental and African Studies,
 398
 Scilly Isles, 31
 SCOM (Students Christian
 Organisation of Malawi), 358, 364
 Scorza, Jason A., 339, 343, 503
 Scotland, 6, 8, 11, 13, 20, 25-26, 30,
 41-44, 50, 55, 72, 90, 93-94, 103,
 140, 142, 144, 148-49, 152, 156,
 160, 164, 167, 197-98, 257, 445,
 448, 450, 452, 454-59, 461, 463-
 66, 468-69, 473, 477, 492-94, 502-
 03
 Scotland Malawi Partnership, 13, 26,
 452, 454-55, 457-59, 464-65, 492,
 502
 Scotland-Malawi Network, 454
 Scott, David Clement, 28, 93, 139-61,
 448, 460-62, 466, 469, 486-87, 503
 Scott, J., 117
 Scottish Society for the History of
 Medicine, 76
 Scripture Union, 364
 Second World War (World War II), 52,
 218-19, 236, 403, 416, 424, 430
 Sedbergh, 18
 Selfridge, Jack, 358, 359, 503
 Sena, 373
 Senegal, 398, 414, 490
 Seventh-day Adventist Church, 334
 Seventh Day Baptist Church, 308
 Seventh-day Adventist, 105, 107, 109-
 11, 478-79, 481, 492
 Shepperson, George, 18, 31, 41-42,
 48, 51, 70, 82, 99-101, 103, 138-
 39, 299-300, 445, 448, 504
 Shire Highlands, 46, 52-53, 117, 119,
 121-22, 151, 297, 402, 415, 420,
 425, 427-28, 497, 507
 Shire River, 282
 Shire Valley, 46, 64, 117, 144, 286,
 297, 428, 507
 Short, Philip, 39, 69, 215, 239, 472,
 493, 504
sinjonjo, 414
 Skocpol, Theda, 272, 273, 504
 Slattery, Patrick, 322, 332, 340, 504
 Small, W., 428
 Smith, Ian, 19, 31, 449
 Soche, 360, 367, 404, 412, 414
 Social Darwinism, 347
 Society of Malawi, 24, 39, 58, 68-70,
 156, 165, 191, 196, 384, 471-72,
 493-94, 496, 499, 503, 508
Society of Malawi Journal, 9, 24, 39,
 42, 44, 58, 68-69, 80, 91, 156, 165,
 191, 196, 372, 384, 471-73, 493-
 94, 496, 499, 503-04, 506, 508
 Soko, Boston, 79-80, 377
 Songwe River, 246-47
 South Africa, 11-12, 47, 64, 89-90,
 104, 130, 165, 169, 170, 174, 176,
 182, 243-44, 250, 252, 254, 278-
 79, 280, 295, 303, 356-57, 369,
 372, 377-78, 389, 398, 401, 405,
 407-09, 415, 448, 466, 469, 481-
 84, 489
 South African, 82, 114, 124, 143, 170,
 174, 176, 220, 233, 280, 282, 399,
 401, 406, 408-09, 411, 479-80,
 482, 484-85, 492

Southern Province, 424-27, 430, 433-34, 442
 Southern Region, 248
 St John's College Cambridge, 18
 Stanley, Brian, 299, 461
 Stapleton, Tim, 65, 71-72
 State of Emergency, 13, 25, 29, 47-48, 70-72, 215, 228-29, 243, 245, 250, 257, 261, 446, 463, 468, 471-73, 489, 494, 500
 Stellenbosch, 93, 97, 101, 105, 110, 114, 165, 175, 199, 201, 211, 479, 481, 487-89
 Stirling, 8, 20, 22, 26, 32, 42-45, 72, 79, 81, 95, 450-51, 471, 490
 Stokes, Eric, 31
 Straker, Jay, 221, 505
 Stuart, R.G., 101, 505
 Sustainable Development Goals, 468
 Sutton, John, 31
 Swart, Ignatius, 318, 476
 Synagogue Church Of All Nations, 294

T

Tanganyika, 47, 77-78, 88, 93, 98, 246-47, 257, 261, 402, 407, 410, 412, 479, 487, 493
 Tanzania, 9, 42, 44, 77, 98, 108, 130, 192, 249, 261, 274, 278, 284, 295, 398, 414, 450-51, 485, 487, 503-04
Tchopa dance, 385
 Tedzani, 282
 Tembo, Dorothy, 5, 13, 28, 191
 Tembo, John, 281, 308
 Tembo, Mawelera, 452
 Temu, 43
 Tengtanga, James, 97, 304, 306-07, 343, 505
 Tete, 124
thangata, 63, 300
 Thatcher, Margaret, 22
The Central African Planter, 151

Theunissen, Archbishop, 303
 Third Term debate, 310
 Thole, Upson Wilson Ndawazake, 377
 Thompson, E., 438-39
 Thompson, T. Jack, 6-7, 26, 30, 82-83, 102, 112, 293, 296, 445, 452-53, 460-62, 465, 505, 508
 Thomson, T.D., 209
 Thyolo, 61, 365, 386, 389, 428
 Tippet, Barbara, 364-65
 Tonga, 50, 53, 202-03, 373
 Touré, Sékou, 221
 Townsend, R.G. Ross, 426
 Trade Unions and Trade Disputes Ordinance (1944), 236
 Transport and Allied Workers Union, 237-38
 TUCM (Trade Union Congress of Malawi), 239
 Tumbuka, 14, 79-80, 201-03, 374, 379, 392, 484

U

Udd, Alice, 256
 Udd, Ragnar, 256
ufiti, 351-52
 Uganda, 9, 98, 172, 307, 398, 478, 500
 UK (United Kingdom), 8, 9, 20, 21, 27, 31-32, 45, 69, 102, 237, 268, 431, 450, 464, 474, 477
 Ulendo Transport Company, 369
 UMCA (Universities Mission to Central Africa), 80, 85, 93, 95, 97, 101, 104, 164, 174, 189, 306-07, 476-77, 479, 488, 490, 497, 504-05
Umhlangano, 389-91
UmsiziWabOndhlayo, 170
Umthetho, 378, 380-83, 386, 388
 UN (United Nations), 220, 268, 282, 291, 385, 468
 UNESCO, 46, 167, 374, 385, 482, 486
 Union Choir, 247-48

United Democratic Front, 384
 United States of America (USA), 12,
 20, 90, 220, 254, 280, 450
 University College of Rhodesia and
 Nyasaland, 19
 University of Blantyre Synod, 113
 University of Dar-es-Salaam, 20
 University of Malawi, 20-21, 59, 69,
 106, 108, 110, 113, 188, 277, 326,
 351, 355, 358, 400, 450, 478, 481,
 492, 499, 503, 505
 University of Strathclyde, 455
 University of the Free State, 12, 109-
 10, 485
 University of Zimbabwe, 19
 USA, 12, 20, 90, 220, 280, 450
 USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist
 Republics), 220

V

Vail, Leroy, 59, 64, 135, 161, 191, 203,
 295, 372-73, 383, 419, 506
 van Breugel, J.W.M., 350-351
 van der Post, Laurens, 39, 66, 472,
 494
 van der Westhuizen, Albert, 165
 van Dijk, 306, 347, 506-07
 Vaughan, Megan, 4, 14, 21, 27, 34, 67,
 78, 117-118, 130, 182, 297, 422,
 428, 450, 507
 Viphya Pulp Mill, 278
 Visanza, 223, 228
Vyaro na Vyaro, 167

W

Wales, 87, 349, 464, 476, 477
 Walker, E.G., 199-200, 507
 Waller, Horace, 85
 Washington, Booker T., 300, 477
 Waterston, Jane, 174, 196
 Weber, Max, 271, 361, 508

Webster, J. Bertin, 35-36
 Wenela, 252
 Wenya, 244-245, 249
 Were, 57
 West Nyasa Native Association, 207-
 08, 212, 235, 375
 West, Peter, 456
 White Fathers, 93, 101, 491
 White, Landeg, 39, 161, 191, 297, 373,
 383, 506
 Wilks, Ivor, 57
 Williams, David T., 69, 226-27, 288,
 508
 Wishlade, R.L., 355, 508
 Witwatersrand, 401
 Woddis, Jack, 219, 508
 Women's Guild, 246
 Woods, George, 284
 Woods, Tony, 63-64, 67, 233, 508
 Word Alive Ministries International,
 111, 364-65, 478
 World Bank, 271, 277, 281-83, 287-88,
 289, 291, 295
 World Vision, 307
 Wortley, E., 425

X

Xhosa, 83, 103, 453, 460-63, 465, 505-
 506

Y

Yamba, 256
 Yao, 53, 138, 140, 144, 159, 373, 383-
 84
 Youens, Peter, 281
 Young, Crawford, 268, 273
 Young Pioneers Act (1965), 225
 Yousaf, Humza, 458

Z

Zalimba, Felix, 362, 364

Zambezi Evangelical Church, 308

Zambia, 47, 51, 59, 72, 105, 108, 111-13, 130, 171, 208, 215, 284, 295, 300, 389, 392, 419, 422, 474, 480-81, 485, 498, 503-06, 508

Zimbabwe, 11, 38, 42, 47, 51, 71-72, 112, 295, 330, 357, 398-99, 408, 416, 433, 440, 478, 496-500, 505, 508

Zingwangwa, 360, 366-367

Zomba, 8-9, 13, 19, 21-25, 27, 39, 43-44, 46-48, 53, 55, 62, 67, 78, 93,

95-97, 101, 103-04, 106, 108, 112, 120-21, 126-27, 132-34, 188, 215, 223, 236, 267, 277, 280-81, 286, 293, 300, 303-04, 306, 308, 313, 326-27, 331, 333, 345, 354-56, 360, 365-66, 386, 399-400, 402-03, 406-07, 412, 417-18, 421, 423, 425, 427, 430-32, 434-35, 439-40, 446, 449-50, 460, 467-68, 471, 473, 478-80, 484, 487-93, 497-98, 500, 502-03, 505, 507

Zomba Native Association, 236

Zulu, 377

Zwangendaba, 212

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The Editors

Rosemary Argente, *Blantyre and Yawo Women*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2018, 375 pp.

The autobiography of a mixed race girl from Blantyre, who made her way in a race conscious society, but fell foul, because of her achievements, with the new government of freedom. Losing much of her property, she relocated to the UK, where she also studied to become a barrister-at-law. This book is not only her autobiography, she also describes the life of her Yawo women ancestors six generations back, starting in the 1790s. The book contains quite some information of the days of her ancestresses and their Yawo culture.

Melvin E. Page, *Distinguished Conduct. An Africa Life in Colonial Malawi*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2019, 262 pp.

Can an African soldier be loyal to his British regiment and stay true to his own society and beliefs? Juma Chimwere, one of the early Central African Rifles soldiers, believes he must! Written by an eminent historian, this book is fiction, but historical fiction in that the major events, including his military engagements in Ghana, Somalia and Kenya and the medals awarded to him personally by King Edward VII and the Governor of Nyasaland, are facts of history.

Kapote Mwakasungura and Douglas Miller, *Malawi's Lost Years (1964-1994) and her Forsaken Heroes*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2016, 259 pp.

"This is a modest attempt by two people who have been greatly touched, one by virtue of origin and birth, the other by marriage and compassion, to try and rehabilitate the lives of a number of Malawians who suffered the indignity of exile on the one hand, and detention on the other during the 30 year misrule under Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda. They serve as representatives for many others who suffered the same fate, many of whom did not survive to tell their stories."

Andrew C. Ross, *Blantyre Mission and the Making of Modern Malawi*, Mzuzu: Luviri Press, 2018, 283 pp.

The story of Blantyre Mission of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, which literally shaped the nation of Malawi, by forcing the British government to disregard the 1890 treaty of Lisbon which "ceded" most of what is now Southern Malawi to the Portuguese "sphere of interest." Andrew Ross wrote this book after being expelled from Malawi due to his faith based political involvement.

Kenneth R. Ross, *Malawi and Scotland in the Talking Place since 1859*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013, 240 pp.

"This pioneering and fascinating book is the first to tell the story of the remarkably enduring bonds between Malawi and Scotland from the time of David Livingstone to the flourishing cultural, economic and religious relationships of the present day. Kenneth Ross is a Scot who has also worked for several years in Malawi. That experience and his own careful research has enabled him to produce a volume which manages to combine authority with readability."

Professor Tom Devine
Personal Senior Research Chair of History
University of Edinburgh

Hany Longwe, *Christians by Grace – Baptists by Choice. A History of the Baptist Convention in Malawi*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2011, 532 pp.

The Baptists are one of the "New Missions" that came to Malawi after "the End of Missions," a few years before Independence. Starting small with American Missionaries in Blantyre and Lilongwe, Malawians took the initiative, leading among them Steven Galatiya, who had become Baptist in Somerset West at the Cape. Much of the early initiative came from members of Achewa Providence Industrial Mission. The interest in and emphasis on evangelism spread the church all over Malawi and into Mozambique.

Wezi Makuni Gondwe, *A History of the Last Church of God and His Christ in Malawi from 1916 to 2015*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2018, 215 pp.

African Independent Churches are sometimes seen as "vanguards of Christian African culture," of which Wezi Makuni Gondwe finds little in her study of the Last Church of God and his Christ in its different branches, but she found that, at least the main branch, went through a full cycle: in the 1920s promoting polygamous Christian marriages, these are no longer allowed in this century. She traces this "return to mainline" in many aspects of life and liturgy, plus the charismatic influences which bring renewal and the tendency to split.

Hany Longwe, *Identity by Dissociation. A History of the Achewa Providence Industrial Mission*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2013, 178 pp.

Before John Chilembwe started the Uprising of 1915, he sent two of his trusted followers to start PIM in Angoni, south of Lilongwe. Kalemba knew nothing of the Rising, but was nevertheless imprisoned. PIM survived in both areas, and after some years PIM in Angoni split into two: PIM and Achewa PIM. Hany Longwe argues that Achewa PIM is not an African Independent Church, but a Baptist church, only without Azungu.

Ulf Strohhahn, *The Zionist Churches in Malawi. History – Theology – Anthropology*, Mzuzu: Mzuni Press, 2016

African Independent Churches are extremely diverse, and this book presents the history of the largest branch in Malawi, the Zionist Churches, which came to Malawi from South Africa. The book is comprehensive, treating the history of all 30 different Zionist denominations. Brought to Malawi by returning migrant labourers, the Zionists found ready acceptance among the Ngoni of Ntcheu. Deeply devoted to traditional African culture, they struggle with modernity, also African Christian modernity.

With the death of John McCracken in 2017, Malawi lost a pre-eminent historian. This book celebrates McCracken's contribution to the study of Malawi's history and seeks to build on his legacy. Part of his genius was that he identified themes that hold the key to understanding the history of Malawi in its broader perspective. The authors contributing to this volume address these themes, assessing the progress of historiography and setting an agenda for the further advance of historical studies. The book is a valuable resource for students, researchers and all who are interested in gaining a deeper understanding of Malawi's past and present.

"This important volume reminds us of John McCracken's major contribution to, and influence on, Malawian historiography since the 1970s. The editors must be commended for ensuring that the authors of the essays are both locally and internationally based but equally significant is their inclusion of the latest generation of Malawian scholars, which would have pleased John immensely. In addition, their impressive work gives direction to guide and inspire future scholarship in Malawi."

Dr Owen J. Kalinga, Professor of History, North Carolina State University, USA

"This collection is a fitting tribute to John McCracken. Its contributions reflect and expand on his scholarly legacy in the economic, social and political histories of Malawi while reflecting his deep commitment to and affection for the land and its people. McCracken would have been much moved in heart and mind by this project."

Dr Joey Power, Professor of History, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada

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from Malawi

